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FAMILY SERMONS.

BY THE
REV. E. W. WHITAKER,

LATE OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD :
NOW RECTOR OF ST. MILDRED'S AND ALL SAINTS,
CANTERBURY.

VOL. III.

"FEED MY SHEEP."

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TO THE
THIRD VOLUME.

SINCE from the uncertainty of the time at which the course may be entered on by different readers, it was impossible the four occasional Sermons on the Spring, the Harvest, the Nativity, and the Crucifixion, should be properly placed in it, they are inserted before the concluding Discourse, that the reader may turn to and introduce them at the proper season, without further interrupting the general line. For the Authour has to request, that, as the whole course was composed with a view to its being regularly gone through, his readers would, not only in justice to the work, but for the purpose of rendering the contents of it more

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easy to be understood and retained, take that mode of reading it, in lieu of selecting each Sunday that Discourse which may strike the idea of the moment.

On reviewing the List of Subscribers, the Authour suspects there are some mistakes, but as he is not perfectly acquainted with the names and designation of those to whom he has not the honour of being personally known, he could only copy them as they stood in the lists made out at the book-sellers, which he has faithfully done, and trusts, this will plead for his pardon with any one who may be improperly designated.

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C O N-

C O N T E N T S

OF THE

THIRD VOLUME.

SERMON I.	Page
-----------	------

On Purity.

PETER ii. xi.

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul - - - - - 2

SERMON II.

On Theft and Fraud.

EPHES. IV. 28.

Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth 23

SER-

C O N T E N T S.

SERMON III.	Page
On the Government of the Tongue.	
ST. MATT. XII. 36.	
<i>But I say unto you, that every idle word that men speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment: for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned</i>	- 45

SERMON IV.

On Covetousness.

EXOD. XX. 17.

<i>Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's</i>	- - - 65
---	----------

SERMON V.

On the Love of our Neighbour.

ROM. XIII. 8.

<i>Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law</i>	- 85
---	------

SER-

C O N T E N T S.

SERMON VI.	Page
On the Lord's Supper.	
I COR. XI. 26.	
<i>For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come</i>	- 105
SERMON VII.	
On the last Judgement.	
REV. XX. 12.	
<i>And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works</i>	- 123
SERMON VIII.	
On the same.	
<i>The same Text</i>	- - - - - 147
SERMON IX.	
On the same.	
<i>The same Text</i>	- - - - - 165

SER-

C O N T E N T S.

SERMON	X.	Page
On the future State of Happiness.		
	REV. XXI. I.	
<i>And I saw a new heaven and a new earth</i>		- 185
	ST. MATT. XXV. 46.	
<i>And these shall go away into everlasting punishment</i>		207
	PSALM CXIX. 75.	
<i>I know, O Lord, that thy judgements are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me</i>		- 227
	PSALM CIV. 14.	
<i>He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herbage for the service of man; that he may bring forth food out of the earth</i>		- - - - 243
	SER-	

C O N T E N T S.

SERMON XIV.	Page
On the Harvest.	

GEN. VIII. 22.

<i>While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease</i>	-	-	-	-	263
---	---	---	---	---	-----

SERMON XV.

On the Signs of the Times.	
----------------------------	--

REV. III. 19,

<i>As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent</i>	-	-	-	-	281
---	---	---	---	---	-----

SERMON XVI.

On the Nativity.	
------------------	--

ST. LUKE ii. 11:

<i>For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord</i>	-	-	-	-	305
---	---	---	---	---	-----

SER-

C O N T E N T S.

SERMON XVII.	Page
On the Crucifixion.	
TIT. II. 14.	
<i>Who gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works</i>	- 325
SERMON XVIII.	
Concluding Sermon.	
ST. LUKE XII. 32.	
<i>Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom</i>	- 343

SER-

SERMON I.

ON PURITY.

I PETER II. 11.

*Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers
and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts,
which war against the soul.*

IN the discourses lately read to you on the ~~SERM.~~
personal vices they have been considered, I.
as they impel us to injure those connected
with us in society; but since some who are
unwilling to part with forbidden indul-
gences, deceive themselves by imagining,
that they so manage their intemperance, as
to hurt not their neighbours, and would
persuade others of the harmlessness of their
conduct; it is necessary further to reflect,
whether compliance with any inordinate
desire

SERM. desire does not naturally hurt the person
I. guilty of it ; and whether these desires do
~~~ not, in the words of the text, war against  
the soul ?

The character in which the apostle here considers Christians, supplies an argument for the conduct he has enjoined, which is by no means sufficiently attended to. Were men like the brutes that perish, designed only for this life, had they nothing farther to look to than this earthly habitation, admonitions against indulgence here could not justly be pressed beyond such restraint as is necessary to keep them from trespassing on others, or bringing temporal damage on themselves. But this being what might properly be termed a place of education for another state, in which our everlasting situation will be according to the spiritual improvement we have acquired here, and all who will not follow holiness being expressly debarred from entrance into the happiness and glories of the future life, it is evident, that to discover the measure of abstinence

necessary here, we must consider, what SERM.  
neglect of it will operate to our exclusion I.  
from honour and felicity hereafter: and  
from the fact of our being only pilgrims  
and strangers on earth, manifestly arises the  
consequence of worldly desires and fleshly  
lusts warring against the soul.

Neither has this consequence, though  
not sufficiently regarded by some who  
reckon themselves among the faithful, been  
always overlooked by the more avowed  
patrons of vice; they have seen, that there  
is something which justice requires should  
be punished, in creatures to whom their  
Maker hath given understanding, and a  
consciousness that they ought to obey its  
dictates; acting in direct opposition to those  
dictates, and putting themselves under the  
sole government of their appetites. They  
have perceived, that evil consequences might  
be dreaded from a man's having his heart  
replete with foul desires, and his mind  
crowded with loose and impure images;  
and that the common sense of mankind

SERMON. will suggest a fear, that those who become  
I. slaves to their lusts, are laying up to themselves a stock of misery for the whole future duration of their existence. To counteract, therefore, the impression of these things on the human mind, they have propagated the doctrine, that no other state is to be expected after this, and endeavoured to make the multitude believe, that death is an eternal sleep.

And should not this acknowledgement alarm the Christian transgressor for the soundness of his reasoning, when he argues, that if he injure not others by it, the gratification of his appetites cannot bring him into condemnation? Should it not influence him to consider, what is the common ground on which an apostle of Christ declares, and the votaries of sin are induced to confess, that fleshly lusts war against the soul?

The effects of indulgence are sufficiently visible in the world, and human experience amply

amply proves the almost unconquerable SERM.  
power of habit. Observe to how dis-<sup>I.</sup>  
graceful a state of impotence men are often  
reduced by the former of these; how in-  
capable do they become of supporting, with  
decent fortitude, the least disappointment;  
by what trifling circumstances are they  
stung with vexation! What an absurd  
anxiety do they betray about things not  
worth a moment's care! and such is the  
debility of mind which they have con-  
tracted, that even from the enjoyment of  
their favourite objects, they receive but a  
peevish pleasure! and now consider, what  
a preparation is such a debilitated state of  
soul, such a contracted restlessness, and un-  
satisfied disposition for entrance into that  
heavenly society, of which we are taught  
the real followers of Christ shall be ad-  
mitted members. But if indulgence in  
particulars, not criminal perhaps in them-  
selves, which partake not of uncleanness,  
to which no impurity is attached, thus  
weakens the powers of the soul, What  
injury must she receive from practices, at

SERMON. the very commencement of which, her sense of right and wrong is forcibly opposed, and in the course of them her moral taste gradually vitiated by repeated submission to the lusts of the flesh ! That carnal gratifications do in fact debase men's minds, turn them from noble pursuits, bias their reasonings, and obscure their understandings, a little attentive observation will convince you.

Mark to what meannesses some who in other respects manifest an high spirit, and are indeed men of great pride, will submit; with what companions they will disgrace themselves, to what insults they will stoop, of what dissimulation they will be guilty, when once enslaved by their inordinate desires. We see the most honourable pursuits given up, the noblest prospects in life relinquished, the closest connections broken off, and the nearest, and those which ought to be the dearest relatives, neglected, for the sake of undisturbed indulgence in some base gratification, of wallowing without inter-

interruption, like the sow in her mire. SERM.  
Yet did any man, think ye, ever begin his  
vicious course with intent to submit to such  
thraldom? No; having formed a plan of  
proceeding no further in transgression than,  
he absurdly imagined, would, under his  
own particular circumstances, admit of ex-  
cuse: thinking to continue under the re-  
straints of reason practices which he com-  
menced contrary to all reason; he yielded  
to the dominion of passion; and when he  
wanted to resume the command of him-  
self, found he had made masters of those  
he meant to be his slaves. Conscious of  
his degraded situation, and fearing, or hurt,  
that others should remark it, his generous  
love of praise, and dread of disgrace, are  
contracted into a peevish jealousy lest his  
character should be reflected on, and the  
native vigour of his mind is lost, scarcely  
or never to be recovered.

Behold, then, how in this sense fleshly  
lusts war against the soul, by bringing it  
into a bondage so severe, that although their

SERMON. victims see the evil tendency of their own  
I. conduct, though they feel its bad effects  
on their reputation, their health, or their  
circumstances, though distress, poverty, and  
ruin, stare them in the face, unable to re-  
strain desires, the great impetuosity of which  
arose from their being at first cherished,  
they are driven forward to the afflictions  
which they foresaw, only after they had  
deprived themselves of the power of pre-  
venting them. And must not minds thus  
enfeebled, souls thus debased, be hopeful  
candidates for glory in a future state, where  
our qualifications for an honourable station  
will be judged of by the fidelity we have  
shewn in using the powers entrusted to us  
here: and our fitness to have any thing of  
our own, by the use we have hitherto made  
of that which was another's? It is not,  
therefore, the present ease and honour of  
the soul only against which carnal appetites  
militate, but against her future dignity,  
her everlasting happiness.

To

To descry, however, still more ample SERM.  
evidence of this, let us more accurately consider the habits contracted by those who are led away by inordinate desires, and the natural effects of those habits. We may take the instance in any kind of wickedness ; the world will afford us examples of every sort. Observe, then, a man who has yielded to the love of gain. See him not ceasing from his endeavours to accumulate, when he has acquired sufficient to provide himself during the longest term of days for which he can hope in this world, not only the necessaries and conveniences, but even the luxuries of life ; but denying himself all those gratifications as the means of which only riches themselves are desirable : toiling day and night, undergoing labour of which his self complains, to heap up wealth which he is conscious he can never enjoy : while neither the perpetual anxiety he suffers, nor his sense of the contemptible figure he exhibits, nor his dread of the fearful judgments of Him who has by His apostle declared, that covetousness is idolatry,

SERM. try, can prevail on him to relinquish his  
I. habits of parsimony, or desist from the  
pursuit of lucre.

Or, turn your attention to the votaries of pleasure and dissipation ; mark the force of the habits they have acquired ; against which neither the admonitions of friendship, the ties of natural affection, the dread of want, nor the sanctions of religion, avail. Or, consider the situation of those whose wretched state calls still more loudly for observation, those, I mean, who abandon themselves to the most profligate pursuit of both pleasure and profit in the vice of gaming. Among these ye may see persons even of that sex whose more tender affections and delicate feelings would, we might suppose, revolt at plans of ruin and scenes of treachery, relinquish the domestick attachments, and become so hardened by custom, that neither the rebukes of those to whose words they are bound to listen, nor the calls of parental duty, nor remorse for contributing to pierce the hearts of others

others with affliction, nor even the publick SERM.  
indignation and contempt, can induce them  
to refrain from giving their honour unto  
others, and their years unto the cruel ; from  
letting strangers be filled with their wealth ;  
and the labours of their husbands or their  
ancestors be in the house of a stranger ; until  
they mourn at the last, when their flesh and  
their bodies are consumed. But as the habits  
of vice are obstinate, so are their effects  
forcible : among the first of these may be  
ranked a disinclination to every better pur-  
suit, a decrease of horrour at further degrees  
of guilt, and necessarily, a dislike to all  
moral instruction and all the truths of reli-  
gion. Neither is this the utmost of their  
extent ; for as the views of the soul are  
debased, so is the light of the understand-  
ing obscured ; the quicknes of the concep-  
tion being blunted, and the soundness of  
the judgement vitiated. Hence the vain  
babblings of the profligate against the doc-  
trines of the Gospel, the nonsenfical argu-  
ments they run through to persuade them-  
selves and others, that they may sin, and

no

SERM. no harm happen unto them : hence their  
I. contemptible credulity in the cases of so  
many false pretenders to knowledge ; hence  
the readiness with which they embrace the  
French philosophy ; hence their dislike to  
the sacred writings, their neglect of the  
assemblies of the church, and their aversion  
from hearing that they have souls, which,  
indeed, are not in the road to salvation.

Thus doth sin block up every path to amendment, and obstruct every avenue to repentance so completely, that though the Lord be constantly working around them, those who yield themselves in bondage to fleshly lusts cannot perceive Him, until He speak to them in thunder. The pure in heart only can see God. It is no matter of surprise, therefore, if those whose hearts are replete with foul imaginations, and whose inclinations set upon the low enjoyments of the earth, cannot comprehend how it should be His will that men should live soberly, righteously, and godly, or that none should partake of His salvation, or be admitted

admitted to His kingdom, who is not SERM.  
cleansed from all iniquity. No wonder if <sup>I.</sup>  
those who can figure to themselves no future  
happiness for which it is worth while to  
abstain from the gratification of the bodily  
appetites at present, can form no idea of a  
state of perfect bliss, from whence all their  
favourite pleasures are banished. But it is  
manifest, that if men of such habits were  
even admitted into the society of the blessed  
above, far from deriving satisfaction from  
the pure employments and spiritual conver-  
sation of such, the holiness of their com-  
panions would be a reproach unto them,  
and the absence of every object in which  
they were accustomed to find pleasure,  
would make Heaven itself no Heaven to  
them. And thus again, do fleshly lusts  
war against the soul !

Having hitherto enquired how the lusts  
of the flesh war against the soul by affect-  
ing its powers, rendering it unfit for the  
dignity and honours of a future state of  
glory, and incapable of participating in the  
happi-

SERM. happiness of that heavenly kingdom, even

1. were it admitted to an inheritance therein,  
~~~~~ let us consider, how they do the same by  
leading men to transgres the divine com-
mandments.

That every kind of impurity, even that of thought, is forbidden by the Gospel, I need not go about to prove; nor that obedience to the laws of God is a specified condition of our attaining to the life of the world to come. Ye scarcely need be reminded of our blessed Lord's answer to him who asked, what good thing he should do, that he might have eternal life. " If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments :" or of His comparison of every one that heareth His sayings, and doeth them not, to a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand: neither of His apostle's declaration, which both states plainly what are the works of the flesh, and the penalty on doing them. " Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lascivi-
ousness,

ousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, vari- SERM.
ance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions,
heresies, envyings, murders, drunkennes,
revellings, and such like; of the which I
tell you before, as I have also told you in
time past, that they which do such things
shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

After denunciations so plain and positive as these, whence can arise the absurd imagination, that any thing less than sincerely breaking off our sin by repentance can prevent our being excluded from that glorious inheritance, unless it be from the pernicious suggestion of the same tempter who said unto the first woman, when she urged the divine prohibition of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, "Ye shall not surely die?" In listening to this assurance of the father of lies, she daringly and ungratefully charged her Creatour and only Benefactor with unkindly laying a needless restraint on the works of His own hands: and doth not every man who, either by word or action, denies the necessity or import-

SERM. importance of the Gospel-precepts of purity,
^{I.} in like manner charge God foolishly ? Does he not withdraw himself from the protection of his Maker, and madly signify, that he can look better to himself ? Whether men will own it, whether they see it or not, this is in reality the declaration which they make when they knowingly transgress the divine commandments ; and whether, after that, they will be admitted to partake in the divine promises, or be delivered from the wrath to come through His protection, whose guidance they have already despised, they may judge from past occurrences.

All the wretched reasonings of the profligate in excuse for his offences might have been urged by our first parents ; their sin, they might have said, would hurt nobody but themselves : and the Devil his self had suggested to them, that there was no great danger in venturing to indulge their appetites ; still the threatened sentence overtook them, and the loss of Paradise and immortality immediately followed that of innocence,

cence. And whose personal experience contradicts this lesson? Reason from what comes daily before you. Will your bodies continue in health without care? If ye conceive that without your making use of the powers He has given you, your Creator will preserve you from disorders, have ye not hourly proofs of the contrary? How many are now lamenting their own folly in not more carefully attending to the admonitions they received in their younger days, not to lay up for themselves pain and sickness in their old age! And how vain do all their lamentations prove to assuage their sufferings? Apply this reasoning to the case of your souls: perpetually are ye reproved, rebuked, exhorted and called upon a thousand ways, not to do those things in this state, which will bring misery on you in the next; and if ye continue deaf to all the motives (so much more weighty than that of avoiding bodily and temporary sufferings) which are urged to persuade you to refrain from what will prove your condemnation hereafter, will not the permitting

SERM. you to suffer the evils with which ye were threatened, be a dispensation of the same justice, which leaves the careless in regard to the health of their bodies, to undergo the consequences of their own folly ? Or who can deliver you from these sad consequences but He who is Lord, as of this, so of the world to come ? And is not this He, whose service, those who follow fleshly lusts, have neglected, whose commandments they have trampled under foot, and whose promises and threatenings they have equally despised ?

This particular of our being, by right of creation, servants of God, and our having been again made so by the being purchased with the blood of Christ, seems to be strangely forgotten by many who profess themselves Christians : for, surely, they cannot be ignorant, that it is expected in a servant that he be found faithful. Yet what is his fidelity, who, instead of honestly exerting his abilities, and employing his time in his master's service, wastes both in riotous

riotous living? What is theirs who never SERM.
think but accidentally of their connection I.
with their Lord, and render Him only the
forms of homage? Who, instead of seri-
ously applying their minds to consider what
work He hath appointed for them, or how
they may most acceptably perform His
charge, do, by spending their days between
idleness and diversion, prove that they are
lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God?
When men consider only their temporal evils
which the pursuit of their pleasures may
bring on them, and indulge themselves as
far as they can without incurring these,
they plainly manifest a total disregard to
the divine censure and approbation: and
thus, by bringing them into the condemna-
tion of those who love not God, and obey
not the Gospel of Christ, do their lusts war
against their souls.

The multitude of victims to the lust of
the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the
pride of life, warrants a presumption, that
men are easily drawn aside by these enemies

SER.M. of their salvation, and thus manifests the necessity of exerting all the powers of self-restraint which we possess : as well on account of the encroaching nature of vice, as of the proofs hereby afforded of the frequent execution of the divine menace, that from him who uses it not, shall be taken away even the little grace he has. Is it not, from this desertion and deprivation of the divine illumination and assistance, that we see such instances of abandoned vice ? Surely it is through this that so many are deaf to every admonition, dead to all shame of their profligacy ; and though they feel the divine judgements beginning to fall on them, in the disgrace, the diseases, the distresses they undergo, proceed with seeming fearlessness to draw down final condemnation on themselves. Surely it is through the gradual diminution of the true light in the breasts of the wicked as their provocations encrease, that we see such encreasing difference between one who continues in innocence, and another who embarks in sin. Compare two females who have taken these

these different courses. I do not mean ye SERM.
should single the instance of vice from the ^{I.} uu
outcasts of society, common prostitutes :
there are, alas ! sufficient instances without
descending to them : and ye will see in the
one such an acquired blindness to the evils
that hang over her, such insensibility of
the criminality of having yielded to fleshly
lusts, such a loss of that delicacy and de-
cency of sentiment which remain unim-
paired in the other, as will suffer you no
longer to doubt, whether in this sense too
fleshly lusts do not war against the soul.
Or, lastly, compare two persons of these
opposite characters in their last scene in this
life ; I mean their death beds : and examine
whether there be no difference in their hopes
and in their qualifications for crowns of
everlasting life and glory in another state.
Consider which has passed as a pilgrim
through this world, and appears going to
receive from that Lord for whose sake he
suffered affliction and reproach, the reward
of a faithful servant, that of admission into
the joy of his Master ; and which has no-

SERM. thing but despair remaining : and see the soul of one rising triumphant as the departure from the body approaches ; and that of the other already dead in trespasses and sin, expecting nothing but everlasting death from his past submission to fleshly lusts. And as ye would prefer the former of these situations, endeavour to preserve, or gain purity of heart. Every breach in which, ye have seen, rapidly increases, admitting a train of evil desires, which, spite of the ignorance or sophistry of those who, according to the hardness of their hearts, heap up for themselves indignation against the day of the just judgement of God, do really war against the soul : assured, that although Heaven and earth pass away, the words of Christ shall not pass away, but this declaration of His apostle stand fast for ever, “ Without holiness no man shall see the Lord !”

SERMON II.

ON THEFT AND FRAUD.

EPHES. IV. 28.

Let him that stole steal no more : but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

IF we may judge of the general state of SERM. II.
morals in the ancient Heathen world, by ~~~~~
the nefarious crimes countenanced and practised by those who have ever been esteemed the wisest and best among their philosophers, most wretched must it have been, indeed, at the time when the disciples of Christ went forth, and preached among the nations the necessity of repentance unto life.

SERM. There existed, it is true, laws in the several
II. communities for the security of the persons
~~~~~ and property of men : but when the grossest  
impurities were encouraged by the pre-  
tended examples of their feigned gods, and  
the actual practice of their most esteemed  
teachers, the licentiousness of the lower  
ranks in the gratification of their passions,  
must have been such as to have placed  
multitudes of them in perpetual need of  
those supplies which sober labour alone can  
give ; and we know, from what we at pre-  
sent see in the world, that those who are  
abandoned to sensual pleasures, are often not  
very nice as to the means by which they  
provide themselves money for their extra-  
vagance. The suggestion thrown out in  
the text, therefore, that before their em-  
bracing christianity, the crime of theft was  
among the Gentile converts neither uncom-  
mon, nor deemed so heinous as in truth it  
is, is accounted for by circumstances that  
must in all probability have existed, and  
also have called for the precept that contains  
it, “ Let him that stole steal no more.”

And,

And, I would I could add, that the necessity SERM.  
of reminding Christians that there is such II.  
a commandment ceased with that genera-  
tion! But, alas! such on the one hand is  
the want of a just notion of the sacredness  
of property, and on the other the hypocrisy  
of men, in calling Christ Lord and Master,  
while they pay little or no regard to His  
words, that even this commandment is  
transgressed by multitudes among us: and  
it is requisite to represent to them, both the  
guilt of theft, and that various practices  
which they are accustomed to disguise with  
a better name, do in truth partake of it.  
This then I shall endeavour to do before  
you in the following discourse, adding to  
the observations necessary for this purpose,  
some on the means of avoiding all tempta-  
tion to dishonesty, and of enabling ourselves  
to be useful instead of mischievous mem-  
bers of society, recommended by the apostle  
in the text, “ But rather let him labour,  
working with his hands the thing which  
is good, that he may have to give to him  
that needeth.”

Now

SERM. Now theft itself consisting in taking away the property of others against the will of the owners, fully to discover the guilt of it, we must consider the sacredness of property ; which arises from its being derived originally from the gift of God. For He having made all things is the first owner, and supreme Lord of whatever existeth ; and having distributed among His creatures various gifts, blessings, and possessions, whoever seizeth or withholdeth any of these from one to whom they belong, without the authority of the first Giver, or the consent of the party itself, to which the Creatour has, in some cases, given full and absolute dominion over what it possesses, rises in opposition to the dispensations of God, and frustrates, as far as in him lies, His ordinances. While to confirm and secure this dispensation, the Lord having also added His express prohibition, “ Thou shalt not steal ! ” the crime of the thief is two-fold ; first, that of disturbing the order which God hath established in the world ;

world ; and, secondly, that of directly opposing His positive commandment.

SERM.  
II.

Consider the subject under this view of it, and ye will easily discover the futility of all the excuses made for this transgression ; as well as the prophaneness of those babblings of the weak and the wicked, who deny the unequal distribution of property in the world to be the dispensation of it's divine Governour, and thus prepare the means of justifying a new partition of it, whenever the needy have power to seize the possessions of the rich.

Still, however, the advocates for open robbery and positive theft are but few in comparison with those who are found ready to defend and to practise, what comes little behind them in criminality : the various frauds I mean practised by men in their dealings with each other. When a man, by a false account of an article of trade, obtains from another a greater sum for it than he is conscious it is worth, Is not this taking

SERM. taking from him by stealth that with which  
H. he did not mean to part, and for which he  
is paid no equivalent? And is not the same  
in reality a theft? I know that the customs  
of trade, and other arguments, specious  
perhaps in the eyes of those who wish them  
to be true, are urged in justification of the  
advantages thus taken; But if by a false  
promise, or a feigned tale, a man be de-  
frauded of money or goods, the offender is  
acknowledged by all to be a rogue, and to  
merit the penalty of the laws; and wherein  
do the cases differ? Does the tradesman  
spare assurances of the value of his goods,  
or is he without stories in their praise? Of  
just so much then as he thus gains beyond  
their just value he defrauds the buyer; and  
is guilty of robbery, aggravated by the in-  
gratitude and treachery he returns for the  
confidence with which his representation is  
accepted.

In the numberless cases in which advan-  
tage is taken of the ignorance of the young  
or inexperienced to overreach them, and  
where

where the unsuspecting minds of the credulous are imposed on, (however some of these modes of obtaining money may be countenanced by the example of many of those who call themselves the fashionable world) the same charge of a breach of the eighth commandment will justly lie. For when a man has his property taken from him by means to which he not only has not, and would not have consented, but which he has not even suspected, Is it not stolen from him?

What I have said of the criminality of obtaining an higher price for articles of trade than they are really worth, is so manifestly applicable to selling them deficient in due weight or measure, that it may appear unnecessary to notice this offence separately, as partaking in the guilt of theft. But such is the blindness of men to their own faults, that one who having been imposed on in the purchase of a piece of fine linen, complains of the iniquity of the merchant of whom he bought it, will re-

turn

SERM. turn to his own house, and there, without  
II. remorse, retail wine and strong liquors in  
measures manufactured on purpose to de-  
fraud. Hence it becomes requisite to state,  
that the portion which is thus holden back  
from the purchaser, who pays for full mea-  
sure, is in fact stolen from him, and how-  
ever common may be offences of this kind,  
no one guilty of them has yet profited by  
the lesson of the apostle, and learned to  
labour, working the thing which is good.

Neither let it be imagined, that the small  
value of what is thus unfairly taken from  
each individual, exculpates the offender.  
For this plea, however commonly used in  
excuse of those petty thefts, success in  
which encourages the guilty to proceed to  
greater, until seized by the hand of justice,  
and the frequency of which perpetually  
disturbs the security, and interrupts the  
comfort of society, is in itself highly ab-  
furd: since a man has the same exclusive  
right to every part of his property, as he  
hath to the whole; and whether you take a  
sum

sum from his treasury, a bottle from his cellar, or a stake from his hedge, you equally deprive him of somewhat that is his own, and thereby become a thief and a robber. And if you are in his service, if you fill any domestick office under him, this your situation, instead of lessening, encreaſes your crime; and by pilfering from your master, you add treason to your theft. True it is, that to deprive a man of much that belongs to him, is a more cruel deed, a more atrocious crime, but were it less than the value of a single mite, he is a robber who takes it, because it is not the value of the thing taken, but merely the depriving him of what is his own that constitutes the offence. Otherwife, miserable indeed would be the case of the poor, since their ſmall pittance would lie open to every plunderer, and the little value of it tend only to justify the invasion.

Neither, manifestly therefore, can the imagined or real wealth of the person robbed excuse the theft. But how then shall

SERM. shall the circumstance of any thing taken  
II. belonging to a nation in general, or any  
less society, render blameless the person  
who has surreptitiously obtained it? Yet  
the multitudes of frauds that have been  
perpetrated, the enormous plunder which  
has been made with this only plea to distin-  
guish them from theft, almost exceeds the  
bounds of common calculation. The con-  
nections and the rank, as well as the craft  
of those who are guilty in this respect, oft-  
times stand between them and justice, but  
whatever be their station, their criminality  
may be increased, but cannot be diminished  
by it, their true characters are still those of  
some of the vilest of mankind, and the  
epithets that justly belong to them are still  
the same: they are in truth not elevated,  
but concealed by honours; not dignified,  
but disguised by titles.

Difficult, indeed, would be the task of  
enumerating all the practices by which, on  
the one hand, the community is defrauded,  
or on the other, individuals are imposed on,

while the offenders would conceal even from SERM.  
themselves, if they could, the iniquities <sup>II.</sup>  
they commit, by applying to them the  
gentle names of perquisites of office, cus-  
toms of trade, and the like. Suffice it to  
add to what has already been said on this  
point, let every man so prove his own work,  
that he may have praise not of men, but of  
the Lord. And let us now turn our thoughts  
from this disgusting view of human wick-  
edness to that method which the apostle  
recommends as a remedy against all real  
temptation to invade the property of others :  
“ Let him labour, working with his hands  
the thing which is good.”

The most powerful plea that a thief can urge for mercy is, that he was impelled by want to commit the depredation : this plea, therefore, St. Paul has completely obviated, by admonishing us of the duty of that, which, if honestly followed, will keep a man above want ; and a little observation will convince you, that the fate of those who become victims to publick justice for

SERM. this crime, may generally be traced to the  
neglect of sober labour. The sentence originally pronounced on man, that in the sweat of his face he should eat bread, still lies so on the race, that the greater part of the world feel their wants encrease as they cease from working. “ I went by the field of the slothful, says the wise man, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding ; and lo, it was grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down ; then I saw, and considered it well : I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth ; and thy want as an armed man.” As it was in his days so it is in our own. The habitation of the slothful may still be distinguished by its state. Has he a garden, it is an uncultivated desert, the hedge torn up, the ground overrun with weeds ; in his house, poverty stares through the broken lattice ; his children, ignorant of all but

their father's example, wander idle in the S E R M. streets, or roam about the fields, pilfering II. from their more opulent neighbours what may preserve them from that cold and hunger, against which his labour should have defended them: his person you may know by the listless gait, and tattered garment; his goods go piece-meal to be pledged; and should charity send him a dinner for his family, he has neither vessels or fuel to dress it. Now when to relieve himself from such pressing necessities, the wretch proceeds to lay his hands on his neighbour's property, Is it not his own idleness that has created the temptation? and would not labour have kept it both from his door and from his heart?

I say from his heart, because those who are properly employed, have not time to think of evil; and because through want of being so it is, that many of higher rank are reduced to that point of necessity which forces them on unwarrantable means of en-

SERM. creasing their substance. For although a  
~~~~~ man be not compelled to seek his daily bread  
by manual labour, is there nothing in which
he can employ himself either for his own
improvement, or the benefit of society? Yet when useful pursuits are not embraced,
to prevent the weight of time, and obviate
that tediousness which attends total idleness,
a succession of diversions, or a round of
company, is sought after, and the great
expences attending these, soon impoverish
even the wealthy; and reduce them to
straights, to deliver themselves from which,
those in whom nothing should be seen but
what is generous and great, who should be
the nerves of the country, connecting the
most distant parts with the head, desert their
natural situations, their family seats, and
conceal themselves in an hired apartment,
from the notice to which their rank entitles
them, or part with their independence for
the sake of profit; if not submit to be
guilty of practices which lower them to
the level of a swindler.

In truth, whether he be found, among SERM.
the high or the low, the rich or the poor, ^{11.}
an idle man is the pest of society : and great
would be benefits resulting to mankind, if
the rulers of this world would execute the
apostolic recommendation, “ That if a man
would not work, neither should he eat.”
For the encouragement given to idleness is
not the only evil arising from the neglect
of this, but what others suffer from the
want into which the indolent fall, should
also be taken into consideration. How many
families are reduced to misery and the ex-
tremity of want through the idleness of the
heads of them ! How many men come in
their old age to be supported by the charity
of their parishes, who, had they laboured
in their youth as they were able, would not
have needed the assistance of others in their
declining years ! And is it honest, even in
the common sense of the word, for a man
to waste his time and strength when he is
conscious the doing so will render him a
burthen to others ? Yet is there not reason
to fear, that many in this country either

SERM. refuse to labour, or idly spend what they
II. do earn, in their youth, with this very
view? that is, from the knowledge that
their parishes are obliged to support them,
when they are impotent, if they have no-
thing to maintain themselves? And is not
this shamefully abusing the charity of the
nation? Or can the bread thus unnecessa-
rily taken from others, some of whom have
scarcely sufficient to feed their own fami-
lies, be said to be well acquired? Let, then,
those who are yet in the prime, or the
vigour of life, timely consider, what dis-
grace they will lay up for themselves, nay,
to what censure they will justly be exposed,
if they, neglecting to employ the powers
they now have, are, through this, hereafter
reduced to throw themselves on their neigh-
bours for support.

I do not mean by what I have now said
to recommend any thing in the least incon-
sistent with our blessed Lord's command-
ment, " Lay not up for yourselves treasures
on earth," God forbid that any thing I
suggest

suggest should be interpreted as advice to SERM. omit the least opportunity of doing good ^{II.} for the sake of saving for the morrow which may never come, in contradiction to the doctrine of our divine Master. We know that the Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble who provideth for the sick and needy ; and the holy psalmist testifies, that in all his experience, he never saw the righteous forsaken, or his seed begging their bread. And to this security of the divine protection the apostle seems to allude, when in the text he recommends working, not to lay up in store what may not be wanted for our own immediate support, but that we may have wherewithal to give to him that needeth. And although it may, at first sight, appear scarcely necessary to recommend to those who are so well disposed as to be inclined to impart of their earnings to others, that those earnings should be honestly acquired, yet recollection of the inconsistent characters sometimes met with, will convince us, that there are who want

SERM. to be reminded, that if they run in debt
II. with one person, that they may give to another, they are, in fact, charitable with other people's money, and are giving to him that needeth that which is by no mean well obtained. Nay, there are even those who imagine that the end will justify the means; and that if it be to support the helpless, or relieve the poor, they are not to be condemned for the methods by which their money was gained. A doctrine subversive of every principle of righteousness, and which our apostle has, in another place, expressly condemned. To a world, then, in which such maxims are but too prevalent, the caution to labour only at that which is good was highly necessary: and the numbers of those who support themselves by ministering to the vices of others, should be reminded, that they are gaining only to their own destruction. For when such come to offer their sacrifice to their Lord, however costly it may be, What is it but the price of guilt?

When

When a man, touched with remorse for SERM.
iniquitous practices of which he has been ^{II.} guilty, after relinquishing them entirely,
sincerely wishes to repair, as much in him
lies, the wrong he has done ; but through
the changes wrought by death, or other-
wise around him, can find no one to whom
he should make restitution, and therefore
distributes the produce of his unjust deal-
ings in charity as a testimony of the reality
of his wish to restore them ; one would
hope the offering of an heart thus sincerely
penitent would not be rejected as abomi-
nable ; but in any case less strong than this,
the offerer of unfair gains may well stand
in fear of receiving an answer like that of
the Lord by His prophet Isaiah, “ I hate
robbery for burnt-offering.” For however
those who continue in sin may be ready to
give, glad to distribute, it is still the sacri-
fice of the wicked which they offer, and
that is an abomination to the Lord : And
how much more if it be given with a
wicked heart ! As it is, when men ima-
gine they can thus cover their sins, bribing
Heaven,

SERM. Heaven, as it were, for pardon. Or, when
II. their sins have left them, not they their
sins, or, when they have continued in the
gains of righteousness, until they think
they have secured enough, to imagine that
that God will accept what they chuse to set
apart for an offering, is it not in the words
of holy writ to think, that He is even such
an one as theirselves? The very worst
generation of the Jews scrupled to put the
price of blood into the treasury of the
temple, but among us the price of a soul
corrupted to its everlasting destruction, is
by some thought an offering that can be
accepted. How ignorant, how brutish must
those be, who entertain such imaginations!
He who would become the servant of the
God of purity, must be pure his self,
“ Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I
am holy.” And the only hope the thief,
the extortioner, the unfair dealer in any
way, and every one who has worked at that
which is not good, has of attaining to re-
pentance unto life is, to give again that
which they have robbed, to wash their hands
in

in innocence, and cleanse their hearts from SERM.
iniquity, and so go to the altar, receive the ^{II.}
cup of salvation, and call upon the name 
of the Lord.

SERMON III.

ON THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE.

ST. MATT. XII. 36.

But I say unto you, that every idle word that men speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment: for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

THESE words stand at the close of SERM. some observations made by our Lord III. on offences of the tongue; and the last clause of them, “ for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned,” seem to refer to His preceding declaration, that, “ Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”

Since

SERMON Since the criminality of the words manifestly proceeds from the corruption of the heart by which they are suggested ; and as long as the language of the mouth continues to be bad, so long it is plain, some foulness remaineth in the heart. And this observation may well serve as an answer to those who would ask, why it is declared, that our words shall clear or condemn us, whereas, in other parts of Scripture we are told, that men shall be judged according to their works ; and there is oftentimes a considerable difference between words and actual deeds ? For the words, whatever they be, prove the real state of the mind ; since, if they be sincere, they certainly do so ; and if they be not sincere, they at once prove its falsehood. It is not, therefore, only by the mischief which they do to our neighbours, that our tongues may bring us into judgement, but by the proofs they yield of the wickedness of our hearts ; and, under this division, I shall now consider the guilt which we may contract by our words.

The

The blasphemy of some of the Jews, who SERM. ascribed the miracles of our Lord to the power of Beelzebub, gave occasion to the declaration of the text ; and although no profane speeches whatever do, as profane, merit the lenient title of idle words, we sometimes meet with men who utter such without seeming sensible of the full import and real criminality of their speeches ; and under this view of them such may well be called idle words, as being spoken without the speakers giving themselves the trouble of reflecting on their real signification and tendency, ere they delivered them. But still this very negligence betrays an heart by no mean duly impressed with reverence for that divine Being whose name or dispensations are thus profaned, and, consequently, are not fitly disposed for the kingdom of Heaven. Now among such speeches are to be numbered, all reflections on the providence of God, and the truth of His revelation ; the last of which are near akin to the offence censured by our Lord at the time He spake the words before us, since

hc

SER.M. he who doubts the truth of the Gospel,
^{III.} questions the reality of the miracles wrought
in its support: all slighting speeches in re-
spect to the importance of religion, all irreverence,
quotations and applications of inspired writings,
and the placing of any thing relating to the worship of God in a
ridiculous light. And while such words
betray an heart still defiled with thoughts
and principles evil and false, they also affect
the hearers of them, who perceiving the
utterers of these bold speeches not to be
immediately punished for them, thence take
courage to follow the sad example: and
thus the divine forbearance to the guilty,
without which they must perish, does itself
add to the number of their crimes; so com-
plex are the chains of sin, so intricate the
toils of Satan! But this evil consequence
may follow every kind of idle words; to
the particular species I am now noticing
there is another attached. Of the restraint
which religion puts upon their passions men
generally wish to get rid, and, consequently,
they eagerly catch at every idea that tends

to

to lighten the weight of its authority, or SERM.
to lessen the importance of its sanctions ; III.
hence it comes to pass, that on a mind
hesitating between virtue and vice, a random
reflection, an inconsiderate word, will make
an impression which the speaker neither
expected nor intended ; and one idle expres-
sion determine a soul to pursuits leading to
everlasting destruction. Let any one who
doubts the danger of such an effect, recol-
lect how often his own resolutions have
been determined by the merest trifles ; how
often, when inclination led the same way,
the least appearance of a reason, the least
shadow of an example, has fixed his choice ;
and he will then see the necessity of bridling
his tongue, if he would wish to keep clear
of the guilt of those who cause others to
offend. If he would wish to avoid being
covered with the justest confusion, the best
grounded terroir on the arrival of that day,
when men shall give account of every idle
word which they have spoken,

SERM. The words of Solomon, “ He that hideth
III. ~~~~~ hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth
slander, is a fool,” by expressing an evil
purpose of heart in those who are guilty of
these crimes, removes them at once from
the class of those mentioned in the text to
one of deeper criminality: and thus slander,
in whatever shape it appears, under what-
ever form it endeavours to disguise itself,
betrays the existence of malevolence in the
heart. Indeed, as it in general springs
from envy, the wish to conceal a motive
which would so surely discredit every re-
port of the tongue actuated by it, impels
the slanderer to assume some false appear-
ance, under which he may deliver, with
less danger of detection, the dictates of that
passion which rancours in his heart. Some-
times it is surprize at things so unexpected
happening that forces the slanderer to break
the bonds of silence, and give a detail of
what has never happened at all. Some-
times his indignation at vice will not suffer
him to be mute, but leads him carefully to
delineate enormities that have not been com-
mitted:

mitted : and at others, even sympathy itself SERM.
is pleaded for dwelling upon the feigned
errours, losses, or crimes of his neighbours.



Nay, do we not sometimes see from that which, with justice and a penetration peculiar to itself, the law of Moses forbad, countenancing a poor man in his cause, occasion is taken, under the fair semblance of disgust at tyranny and oppression, to vent against a superiour malice that has been long brooded in the heart ; and his motives are misrepresented, his actions misconstrued, and his character vilified, not for the ostensible reasons then given, but for a grudge of ancient date. And before the Judge, who searcheth the reins and the heart, will such words, think ye, tend to justify or condemn the utterers ?

The same question may well be repeated in the case of those who, with malicious pleasure, propagate the evil reports they hear of their acquaintance. It may, perhaps, be true, that they repeat no more than they have heard ; what they have so

SER.M. heard may likewise be true: But what must
III. be the heart of him who can speak with
pleasure of his brother's shame? Can it be
the residence of love and good-will? Or if
his words indicate the abode of something
very different from these therein, when the
judgement shall sit, must he be justified or
condemned by them? These are points
well worthy the serious consideration of
those who, while they partake not in the
ingenuity, yet share in the guilt of the in-
ventors of scandalous tales, making them
their own by the confidence with which
they repeat them. Small would be the
circle in which the raiser of a mischievous
report could his self spread it, it is by the
retailers of it that it is carried to the extent
to which it reaches; gradually enlarging
itself like military commands, first to tens,
from tens to hundreds, from hundreds to
thousands, and from thousands to tens of
thousands; until the original authour of the
scandal is lost in the multitude of his par-
ners in guilt; and the reputation of his
victim is generally defamed. Various, in-
deed,

deed, will be the motives of different individuals in this multitude for the propagation of the tale : while some are evidently impelled by envy, and others manifestly guided by malevolence, some are actuated by the same motives in a less degree, even down to that proportion in which they are almost concealed from themselves ; and, in others, the report truly becomes idle words, being uttered merely to fill up the pauses of conversation, without considering the truth or the falsity, the good or evil tendency of what they say. Yet all this while the character of the subject of the scandal is suffering ; and after, perhaps, he has seen and acknowledged, and repented of the fault that is so much blazed abroad, censure continues to be heaped on him without remorse ; and neither the feelings of his friends and connections, nor the injustice of loading with invective one, who no longer deserves reproach, can stop the wordy torrents of those babblers, who are skilled in little other labour than that of the lips.

SER.M. I doubt not but to some persons these, III. which are daily offences of common conversation, may seem too trifling to deserve notice; but nothing is so among those whose duty it is to strive to go on to perfection; and although trifling indeed are the characters of those idle persons, who wander about from house to house, as tattlers and busy bodies, speaking things which they ought not, yet it may, I conceive, reasonably be doubted, whether they do not hereby nearly as much mischief to society as they are capable of doing; and Can they, think ye, be justified by having done no more than this?

We often hear people reproaching themselves for not having thought before they spake, and lamenting the consequences of their words, when it is too late to prevent them; and the very frequent instances of this would, one might hope, serve as a caution to others against repeating the same folly. But, alas! almost daily are the proofs we receive of the justice of the apostle's obser-

obseruation, that the tongue setteth on fire SERM.
the course of nature. For, who can reckon up the secret animosities, the open quarrels, which are occasioned by the mismanagement of it! In fact, to one who attentively considers it, the effect of words upon the human mind seems beyond all estimate: not only the deep offence that a word unadvisedly spoken will give, calls for our attention, but the whimsical temper that men betray in their resentments on this point should impress on us the necessity of circumspection. For, strange as it may appear, experience, I believe, will prove, that it is not at reflections on their moral character that men shew the greatest indignation; a reproach on their judgements, their tastes, and even those for which they are least of all answerable, their persons, is much more eagerly resented: while even those who are not quick in quarrel, feel no less sensibly on such occasions; and the hearts of the gentle and inoffensive are wrung by words, which, if spoken with intention to produce all their effects, would

SER.M. manifest sad bitterness of spirit ; but even
III. when uttered without that, betray a very
reprehensible disregard to the peace and
comfort of others.

There is a generation who seem to delight in giving vexation where they think they may safely do it ; you see them perpetually persecuting, with poignant ridicule and cruel jests, individuals, from whose temper or abilities they imagine themselves secure against the retort they merit. You hear them propagating tales to make such appear ridiculous ; and leading them into embarrassment by feigned information. What disposition of soul, then, do the words of these men indicate ? Surely not a charitable one in themselves : neither do they tend to promote the growth of it among others. Their most common excuse is, that they were but in sport. But to sport with the sufferings of others is, under the most favourable interpretation, the characteristick of him to whom Solomon applies it, “ As a madman who casteth firebrands, arrows, and

and death, so is he that deceiveth his neighbour, and faith, Am I not in sport?" And the errors into which they lead those whom they make their dupes, may, with great ease, thus give rise to disgust, animosity, and contention. And can we suppose the authours of such evils will be justified by their words?

If not, however, what shall we think of the tale bearer, for those are the natural fruits of his labours; so much so, indeed, that the wise king seemeth to ascribe the continuance of strife exclusively to him; "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no tale bearer, the strife ceaseth." (Prov. xxvi. 20.) And in another place; "He that covereth a transgression, seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter, separateth very friends." Nay, the divine lawgiver his self saw sufficient in this practice to require an express prohibition; and we read, in the 16th verse of the 19th chapter of Leviticus, "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale bearer among thy people,"

SERM. people," coupled with, " Neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour," and supported by that solemn and sublime clause of authority, " I am the Lord." If we may judge from the multitudes of mistakes of the kind, it is a very difficult thing accurately to represent to another the words or the deeds of a third person: and individuals differ so much not only in their modes of expression, but in their conception, that it seems almost impossible, that a thing given at second hand should not vary in some measure from the original; yet that troublesome generation who tell of such things as pertain not to them, are generally confident that they repeat them as they heard them; and thus are kindled flames of contention that at length alarm the authours of them, and lead them to ask, with all the vacant wonder of the fool, Who would have supposed what they did so innocently would have produced such consequences? For I am far from meaning to insinuate, that all tale-bearers are guilty of intentional mischief:

be

be it acknowledged, that their words are SERM.
only idle words, yet since these are for-
bidden, they are, while uttering them,
doing that which is unlawful: and if, by
committing this, they occasion evils which
they never intended, it highly becomes them
to consider, whether for such evils they
may not justly be called into judgement.

The same flimsy excuse of meaning no
harm, is pleaded by some, who take still
greater liberties in speech; and we hear
men convicted of falsehood urge, that they
did not intend to hurt any one by what they
said: but even if they affirm, as others
will boldly plead, that their object was to
do good thereby, so far from making a
sound defence, they are only confessing
themselves guilty of what the apostle so
strongly reprobates by asserting, that just is
the damnation of those who say, Let us do
evil that good may come. How much less
then, when they break the divine com-
mandment, Lye not one to another,—for the
sake of appearing to be endued with wit,

or

SERM. or possessed of some excellency which they
III. have not ! These are far from idle words
~~~~ being uttered on purpose to deceive ; and  
with the multitude of others that are so, to  
conceal faults, avoid anger, or gain favour,  
when brought to account in the day of  
judgement, must tend to condemn those  
who are guilty of them of lying lips, and  
a deceitful tongue. Indeed, these last often  
contain false accusations of others, either  
directly made, or conveyed in hints not to  
be misunderstood ; or by assuming the merit  
which in truth belongs to others, rob them  
of their due recompence, and are really  
breaches of the ninth commandment.

Neither among mere idle words are to  
be ranked that foolish talking and jesting,  
which the apostle says, become not Christians ; conversation, I mean, replete with  
those coarse jests and obscene images in  
which the profligate and lascivious delight  
to deal. When men use gross expressions  
without appearing to be sensible of the in-  
decency of them, What is this but a mark  
that

that they have destroyed all sense of purity SERM.  
from their minds ? and if they are sensible III.  
of what they utter, How foul must be those  
hearts, from the abundance of which pro-  
ceedeth an almost continued stream of filthi-  
ness ? The mischief perpetrated by men  
of this character is not limited to the con-  
fusion with which loose discourse covers  
the innocent and modest : from causing this,  
perhaps, they are, in many cases, careful  
to refrain ; but both their words and example  
tend to the corruption of the young, to en-  
courage them in vices to which they are  
already too much inclined, and to enflame  
their appetites which are already difficult  
to be controll'd : And how shall those  
words be justified which cause one of the  
little ones that believe in Christ to offend ?

The worst of those which can justly be  
termed idle words, are such as while we  
doubt whether we should utter them or not,  
because the nature of them seems undecided,  
we yet deliver in the mere wantonness of  
speech. When, therefore, we are so little  
scrupulous

SERM. scrupulous of running the hazard of a  
~~~~~ III. crime, if we actually commit one, Can we  
wonder that we shall be called into judge-
ment for it? “ In a multitude of words,”
faith Solomon, “ there wanteth not sin.”
And if we consider the vanity of the opi-
nions, the badness of the maxims, and the
falsity of the assertions, which great talkers
deliver, we shall see sufficient reason to
assent to the justice of the observation; and
particularly so in regard to that profusion
of asseveration which they use, protesting
by every thing that should be sacred, the
truth of the most unimportant matters. In
fine, crimes of the same kind, although
not of the same degree, and mischief of the
same sort, although not of the same extent,
are committed by the idle babbler, as by
the intentional offender; and since we are
warned against the evils of this practice,
we are, in the purest justice, answerable for
whatever we may occasion by neglecting
the admonition. Let it therefore sink deep
into your minds, that “ death and life are
in the power of the tongue: and they that
love

love it shall eat the fruit thereof." That SERM.
" he that can rule his tongue shall live ^{III.} without strife; and he that hateth babbling shall have less evil. Rehearse not unto another that which is told unto thee, and thou shalt fare never the worse. Whether it be to a friend or a foe, talk not of other men's lives; and if thou canst without offence, reveal them not. If thou hast heard a word, let it die with thee; and be bold, it will not burst thee." Remember, that trifling in sense as may be the multitude of words that are spoken, they are far from trifling in their consequences; since by them it will be determined, whether we are worthy to be admitted to an inheritance in that everlasting kingdom of purity, peace, and righteousness, which is ready to be revealed: and as ye would not risque your final lot on the babblings of an heedless tongue, let the solemn words of Him from whose mouth your last sentence must proceed, serve you as a perpetual admonition to circumspection and restraint. " But I

SERM. say unto you, that every idle word that
III. men speak, they shall give account thereof
in the day of judgement: for by thy words
thou shalt be justified, and by thy words
thou shalt be condemned."

SERMON IV.

ON COVETOUSNESS.

Exod. xx. 17.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

IN the sad list of those vices which St. SERM. Paul hath forewarned Christians should, with unbridled licence, overrun the world in the perilous times of the last days, selfishness and covetousness hold the first places ; “ This know also,” says that most vigilant minister of Christ, “ that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves,

SERM. covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers,"
IV. and so on. It is true, an ingenious disputant might here demand, " In what age have not men been selfish and covetous?" But the words of the apostle plainly point to a peculiar prevalence of these vices, and that in a degree which should affect the general safety of believers; " Perilous times shall come."—Days of difficulty and hazard.

†.

The true and important question therefore is, Have we ourselves lived to see times of this description? And as this is the proper question to be asked, so is it one that is easily resolved. For can we not of our own knowledge testify, that licentiousness is risen to such a height, and apostacy from the faith become so common, as to multiply the temptations, and encrease the difficulties of those who would yet continue in the doctrine of the Gospel? Have we not seen a very numerous nation publickly renounce christianity, and put many who would not join in the general impiety, to death,

death, for their adherence to religion? And have not the two vices which stand at the head of the catalogue left us by St. Paul, had a very great influence in producing this state of things? Consider what first opened a door to the confusion, the excesses, and the miseries, that have overrun that wretched land? What first took off all the salutary restraints that regular government, a sense of religion, and respect for authority imposed on the passions of its inhabitants? Was it not the desire of some individuals to supplant others in the dignities and the emoluments they possessed? And what was this but covetousness? What gave rise to the doctrine of equality, but the desire of those who had little, to partake of what belonged to those who had much? Or what has caused the same doctrine to find so many favourers in our own country, but an evil eye at the superior power, or more ample possessions, of those who are greater or richer than themselves? The leaders of the guilty, it is true, hold out other pretences for their conduct: but this they do,

SERM. because the publication of a motive so foul,
iv. would doubtlessly prevent their success ;
not because they have any repugnance to own their disregard of the precepts of religion, since these they are infane enough most openly to deride. To this more exceeding sinful point of sin, many of their followers, we may hope, would not willingly accompany them ; but being deceived by reasonings cunningly devised to mislead, they have, ere they were aware, been seduced to act directly contrary to His laws, whom they still own for their God and their Saviour ; although they would be unfeignedly shocked at thinking they had presumptuously trampled on His commandments. For such then, and for others, who, without timely admonition, might suffer themselves to be brought into the same situation, lest any such teachers should come among you, I shall now investigate the divine precept contained in the text, and shew how totally inconsistent with it are those levelling doctrines which such various means are used

used to instil into the hearts of the people SERM.
of this land. IV.

This commandment, ye know, stands the last of the ten ; and it seems to have been there placed, because obedience to it is a sure mean of securing a compleat compliance with those that precede it : since he who does not covet his neighbour's wife, or his neighbour's goods, will scarcely proceed to adultery or theft. It appears here, likewise, as the seal of Heaven to the sacredness of property ; and gives the sanction of God Almighty to that exclusive right which every man has over all that is his own ; whether it be much, or whether it be little. On which account it seems to be but a natural step in the progress of vice, for those who have once embraced principles destructive of this right, to proceed to deny the authority of God Himself, against whom they have already rebelled in fact. And in what must this course begun in covetousness end but in misery ? Or if all men were to give way to this vice, (and if

SERMON. one may practice it without guilt, surely
IV. all may) Would not the earth exhibit only
a scene of rapine, murder, and inexpressible
distress?

It is under the pretence of friendship to the lower ranks of men, that the propagators of the doctrine of equality endeavour to forward their system. But mark the fruits of this friendship in the natural order in which they arise; or, in other words, observe the curse which, by His original constitution of things, God hath affixed to the breach of this His statute, “Thou shalt not covet.” When a man begins to imagine that he should be happier if he had some possession of his neighbour’s, he no longer enjoys the peace of mind that flows from content. Incapable of deriving satisfaction from what he has, because his wishes are anxiously fixed upon something yet unobtained, he consumes, in all the solicitude of desire, that time which, but for improper inclinations being raised in his mind, might have been passed in comfort:

so falsely do those who excite such wishes SERM.
in our breasts stile themselves our *friends* ! IV.
But if, to free himself from the disquietude
of desire, he proceed to obtain by fraud or
force the possession which he covets, of a
neighbour he makes an enemy, and becomes
exposed to all the penalties which may
justly be exacted from the thief or the
robber.

Similar to what it thus produces in the
case of an individual, are the effects of
covetousness when it is excited in a multi-
tude : experiencing separately the same un-
easiness, they become collectively restless ;
and by communicating their complaints,
they mutually inflame each other's minds,
till bursting the chains of fear, as they
have before broken the bands of conscience,
they assert, by brute force, the claims which
justice would not support : the rightful
possessors of the goods desired, are thus re-
duced to violent means of self-defence ; and
all the horrors of civil war, of natural
consequence, ensue.

SERM. This, it *must* be acknowledged, would
IV. be the case, where the party that wishes to
gain, and that which is unwilling to lose,
are nearly equal in number or in power;
but if the friends of the levelling system
are willing to suppose a course of events
more favourable to their schemes, and that
the multitude of their associates would at
once repress all opposition, and thus put
them in possession of that share of good
things which they wish to have, let us
examine what would then be the conse-
quence.

Would not the acquisition of what was
at first demanded only lead to further re-
quisition? Would not the gratification of
some desires cause others likewise to arise?
This a little observation will demonstrate to
you is the common progress of human
appetite. If it were not, we should be able
to point out some degree of wealth and
power at which, when men arrive, they
are in general content to stop. But who-
ever heard of that point? Look at those
around

around you, whose situation in life has been SERM.
improved ; are they not reaching at some- IV.
thing further ? Or enquire of your own
heart ; Are ye at all more satisfied with
your state now, than ye were years ago ;
when ye imagined, that ye could by this
time have obtained something, that would
have secured your contentment ? Consider
any above you whose places ye would be
most desirous of occupying : ye will find
that they too have their troubles ; and, if
those who from their infancy were prepared
for such situations, meet with cares in them,
Would not ye who are unused to them find
still more ?

Behold, then, the folly of that covetous-
ness with which designing men strive to
enflame the minds of the poorer part of the
community. Being, from its origin, a
transgression of the laws of God, like every
breach of those perfect ordinances, it neces-
sarily tends to the misery of the transgres-
sors ; and even if, without noticing the
enormous crimes which must be committed,
and

SER.M. and the almost insuperable difficulties that
IV. must be overcome, ere such a thing could
be accomplished, we for a moment suppose
that perfect state of equality introduced into
society, which none but the most ignorant
of men, or those of disordered intellects,
can imagine feasible; the taking away all
inequality of possession would not extinguish
covetousness; because a man's neighbour
not having more than he, will not prevent
him from the wishing to have more than
his neighbour: and though there would be
none in the race of life to overtake, there
would still be all to leave behind; which
would be an equally strong spur to the
passions, of either avaricious or ambitious
men.

It being, therefore, contrary to the nature
of the human passions to be cured by in-
dulgence, and especially so to that of one
which being not bodily but mental, is not
weakened or extinguished by the debility or
age of the body; and this, by the just
appointment of Heaven, leading, while it
does

does continue to prevail in our breasts, only SERM.
to misery : What have we to do but to re- IV.
press, and, if possible, to root all covetous
desires out of our hearts ? To induce you
to set about a work so salutary, so produc-
tive of peace, so necessary to your happiness,
to the statement I have already made of the
folly of indulging this passion, let me now
add that of its guilt, as comprehending in-
justice to man, and impiety towards God.

Strange as it may appear, that in this land where so much pains are taken to instruct the poorest of the people in the great principles of morality, there should be any who can enter upon a course of conduct replete with iniquity, and yet not be sensible of the injustice of it ; yet, I believe, it is true, that many have listened with pleasure to proposals for levelling the distinctions, and making a new distribution of the possessions of the country, without being at all stricken with the nefarious wickedness of the scheme proposed. Engrossed with the thought of gaining by the change, and of partaking

SERM. partaking in what their superiors now
iv. enjoy, they never considered whether, if
~~~~~ they were in the situation of those who  
were to be plundered, they should be willing  
to have their property in like manner taken  
from them ?

Yet the very lowest rule of justice is, not to do that unto another, which we would not he should do unto us. Had this been observed, What numerous malignant aspersions cast upon the higher orders of society, how many misrepresentations made to render them hateful in the eyes of the inferior classes, would have been buried in silence ; because the utterers would not like such calumnies to be spoken of themselves ! Had this been observed, how early would have been rejected every idea of conspiracy, to strip of their legal rights, and attack in their lawful possessions, those who were raised by their rank or property above the commonalty of the land ! For are the boldest leaders, the most obstinate supporters of such conspiracy, inclined to have any rights

rights theirselves claim, trampled on, or SERM. any property they may possess, taken from them? If not, the application of this maxim of justice shews at once the hideous deformity of their conduct. While comparing that conduct with the prohibition of the text, will no less quickly shew how exposed it is to the divine vengeance. For thus saith the Lord, “Thou shalt not covet (not only thy neighbour’s house, wife, servants, or cattle, but) any thing that is thy neighbour’s.”

Now, is it possible, any man could entertain a thought of joining with others to take a portion of his neighbour’s property, and divide it among themselves, without transgressing this commandment? For observe, it is the very wish that is forbidden; nor is the prohibition restrained to the particulars enumerated, but is extended universally to every thing that is thy neighbour’s: and we cannot envy a man for his wealth, his privileges, or his place, without breaking this precept of the Governour  
of

SERM. of the universe. That much uneasiness,  
IV. and many sufferings, naturally attend the transgression of it, I have before shewn in stating, that a man no sooner begins to desire any part of his neighbour's property, than he forfeits the tranquillity of his own mind ; that it opens the way to contention, and, in its progress, necessarily produces hostilities. I must now call your minds to the manifest judgements which God hath been pleased to inflict on some who have more especially disregarded this commandment.

The first step towards coveting what is our neighbour's, is becoming discontented with what ourselves possess ; a state of temper which generally breaks forth into murmuring against the dispensations of Providence ; and which we are, by an apostle, cautioned to avoid, by the example of the Israelites, who, in the desert, perished through the same ungrateful behaviour : “ Neither murmur ye as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.”

From

From being discontented with our own ~~SERM.~~  
goods to envying those of others, is an easy  
transition; and then is our breach of the  
commandment perfect. The tremendous  
manifestation of the divine wrath on both  
these crimes, is thus described by the  
psalmist: “They lusted exceedingly in the  
wilderness, and tempted God in the desert,  
and He gave them their request, but sent  
leanness into their soul. They envied Moses  
also in the camp, and Aaron the saint of  
the Lord. The earth opened and swallowed  
up Dathan, and covered the congregation of  
Abiram; and a fire was kindled in their  
company; and the flame burnt up the  
wicked.” And what shall I say more? For  
the time would fail me to tell of those  
who, in the pursuits of ambition and avarice,  
both forbidden by the tenth commandment,  
have been made to eat the fruit of their  
own doings, and, like the discontented  
Israelites, perished while the meat was yet  
in their mouths.

There

SERM. There is, however, an instance so near  
IV. our own doors, so pregnant with instruction peculiarly adapted to ourselves, that it would scarcely be less than leaving unnoticed a marked lesson of the Almighty, to close this discourse without mentioning it. That nation which, awhile ago, was holden up to the inhabitants of this land as setting a bright example of wisdom, and as having discovered a method of raising themselves to an unprecedented height of glory and happiness, and as preparing the way for the reign of peace and felicity over all the earth: that nation, I say, having first seized the wealth of all the opulent among themselves, then broken into the adjoining countries, and plundered the inhabitants of them, are now starving in the midst of their neighbour's possessions. They, indeed, not only broke the divine commandments, but, with the most daring impiety, blasphemed and denied God and His Christ, wherefore the Lord seems to have taken their punishment more immediately into His own hands, the nations which

which their nefarious conduct raised against ~~S E R M.~~  
them, have met with little success in the IV.  
~~~~~ war, yet are the people who call themselves  
victorious, reduced to the lowest state of
misery. The sword having passed through
their land in its most dreadful shapes, the
pike of the conspirator, the dagger of the
assassin, and the axe of the executioner,
different adventurers have, by turns, gained
the command both of the power and purse
of the country, until the people, equally
fleeced by all, have lost all sensibility through
their sufferings, and lie in the lowest state
of human degradation; deprived of all the
comforts of this life, and incapable of
drawing consolation from the hope of another.
Let us, then, as witnesses of these
just afflictions, give glory to God, and con-
fess the equity of the sentence uttered by
His prophet; “ Woe be to him that covet-
eth an evil covetousness to his house, that
he may set his nest on high, that he may
be delivered from the power of evil. Thou
haft consulted shame to thy house, by cutting
off many people, and hast sinned against

SERM. thy soul. For the stone shall cry out of
IV. the wall, and the beam out of the timber
shall answer it. Woe be to him that build-
eth a town with blood, and establisheth a
city by iniquity. Behold, Is it not of the
Lord of hosts, that the people shall labour
in the very fire, and the people shall weary
themselves for very vanity?" And let us,
if we would not bring down the same cala-
mities on our country, and ourselves, learn
from this most impressive example, that
covetousness leads not to riches ; that though
men should prove too weak to resist the
plundered, the Lord He is strong : and if,
by attacking the former, ye break the laws
of the latter ; though following the com-
mon course of wickedness, ye, after putting
away a good conscience, make shipwreck
of faith, and deny God, He cannot deny
Himself, but is to day the same, who in
times past declared, " Vengeance is mine,
I will repay, saith the Lord !" Humble
yourselves, therefore, under the mighty
hand of God ; when suffering, commit your
cause unto Him that judgeth righteously ;
then,

then, when He shall be revealed, taking SERM.
vengeance on those who knew not Him, ^{IV.}
and obey not the Gospel of his Son, instead
of hiding your faces with terror from Him
Who sitteth on the throne, ye shall rejoice
at His appearance, and glory in the God of
your salvation !

SERMON V.

ON THE LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR.

ROM. XIII. 8.

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

THE delivery of this general rule is SERM.
preceded by the mention of several
particulars, in which the apostle directeth
its application: and the turn of expression
used in it appears to have been occasioned
by the terms he had employed in recom-
mending those particulars: “ Render to all
their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due,
custom to whom custom, fear to whom
fear, honour to whom honour. Owe no
man any thing but to love one another.”

SERM. The strength of language here to be
v. gained by the change of phrase, could not
escape so able a master of reasoning as St.
Paul; and he has used it in its full extent;
suddenly striking to our hearts the lesson
that our love of one another is a debt which
we should deem never to be compleatly dis-
charged; while, by continuing in the pay-
ment of it, we shall fulfil the law which
contains our duty towards our neighbour.
For to the commandments of the second
table only does he seem here to have re-
spect; since he immediately subjoins, " For
this thou shalt not commit adultery, thou
shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou
shalt not bear false witness; and if there
be any other commandment, (as there is,
honour thy father and thy mother) it is
briefly comprehended in this saying, namely,
thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Which limitation of the apostle's meaning
I would particularly recommend to your
attention, as tending to expose, in this case,
the reasoning of a generation now but too
numerous, who have embraced a very sum-
mary

mary method of easing themselves from the SERM.
burthen of the particular precepts of reli- ^{v.}
gion, by persuading themselves, that their
whole duty is contained in an ineffective
benevolence, sheltered behind their preten-
sions to which they lie insensible to the calls
of truth, justice, and piety. There may
be others also to whom, although they be
not so far advanced in error, the setting of
the injunction of the text in its proper
light may afford an useful admonition.

It is, then, an active principle, by the entertainment of which we are here taught that the law is fulfilled, and whatever is less than that, is not the thing meant to be inculcated: owe no man any thing but love, is, render to all their dues with that readiness, sincerity, and integrity, which the feelings of affection, as well as the sense of justice, dictate: and it is clearly at the compleat discharge of all the social duties, of every charitable office, that nothing shall remain unpaid, that this precept is directed, in opposition to the backwardness and par-

SERM. ^{v.} tiality which men are apt to betray in the performance of them, and the evil ingenuity they shew in framing systems to elude the force of the commandments : the envious man cannot conceive, how his propagating an evil report, which his malice makes him believe to be true, can be a breach of the ninth commandment ; neither can a covetous man imagine, what the advantages he takes, can have to do with the crime forbidden by the eighth ; while many, who perhaps think themselves entitled to the character of benevolent, have nothing to urge in support of their claim, but that they do no harm to any body. How different is this from the principle the text would inculcate, that our debt of kindness is never discharged, but that as long as there are any good offices we can do, so long do we continue to owe them ! It is true, the apostle says, that love is the fulfilling of the law, because it worketh no ill ; but, surely, he never meant to restrain its operation to this, when he has his self given so many precepts that extend beyond it ;

it; and when his divine Master had formally delivered rules of action in addition to those of the law, and expressly called this very commandment in the extent in which He gave it, a new one. “ A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one other; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”

Far from this, too, there were in the law of Moses several positive precepts, exemplifying the manner in which the general commandment, “ Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” was to be applied to practice; and would Christians occasionally peruse these, they might gather from them useful hints towards complying with the exhortation of St. John, “ My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed, and in truth.”

That carelessness in respect to the property of others, which is often manifested among us, and is so incompatible with real regard for the owners of it, will appear highly

SERM. highly opprobrious to those who live under
v. an higher dispensation, if compared with
~~~~~ the following precept of Moses : “ Thou  
shalt not see thy brother’s ox, or his sheep  
astray, and hide thyself from them : thou  
shalt in any case bring them again unto thy  
brother. And if thy brother be not nigh  
unto thee, then thou shalt bring it into thine  
own house, and it shall be with thee until  
thy brother seek after it, and thou shalt re-  
store it to him again. In like manner shall  
thou do with his asfs ; and so shalt thou do  
with his raiment ; and with all lost things  
of thy brother’s which he hath lost, and  
thou hast found, shalt thou do likewise :  
thou mayest not hide thyself.” Deut. xxii.  
1—3.

Compare with this direction the readiness with which some, who yet would not be called uncharitable, apply to their own use what they find belonging to others. Compare with it the insensibility with which others will waste, or destroy what is their neighbour’s ; from the lawless hunter, who

demolishes the fences, and tramples down SERM.  
the crops of the husbandman, to the waste- V.  
ful domestick, who pleads his master's sup-  
posed wealth for needlessly consuming his  
substance: and ye will then see, that while  
the law commanded no more than the real  
practice of the love it had enjoined, the  
pretended disciples of the Gospel, prove the  
conformity of their lives with it, by doing  
deeds of hatred to their neighbours.

Again, it was said to them of old time,  
“ If there be among you a poor man of  
one of thy brethren within any of thy gates  
in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth  
thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor  
shut thine hand from thy poor brother: but  
thou shalt open thine hand unto him, and  
shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need,  
in that which he wanteth. Beware that  
there be not a thought in thy wicked heart,  
saying, The seventh year, the year of re-  
lease, is at hand; and thine eye be evil  
against thy poor brother, and thou givest  
him nought; and he cry unto the Lord  
against

SERM. against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou  
v. shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall  
not be grieved when thou givest him: be-  
cause that for this thing the Lord thy God  
shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all  
thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor  
shall never cease out of thy land: therefore  
I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open  
thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy  
poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.”  
Deut. xv. 7—11.

To say that the generous bounty here commanded is seldom practised in our land, would be doing gross injustice to many among us: But is there not yet a remnant whose behaviour calls for the admonition; who imagine that they have satisfied every obligation incumbent on them if they have not taken or withholden the property of others, and have no conception of the debt mentioned in the text, “ to love one another?” The pleas which such use for saving their money, that it was through their own imprudence that those who need

their

their assistance, became poor, that every SERM.  
man has difficulties enough of his own to <sup>V.</sup>  
struggle with, and the like, are by no mean  
allowed in the law. How much farther,  
then, must they be from availing aught un-  
der the Gospel, of which the distinguishing  
commandment is, that we love one another  
as Christ loved us? For He loved us so,  
as to suffer for us; to love, as He loved,  
therefore, we must be ready to put ourselves  
to inconvenience, nay, and to something  
more, if that be necessary, for the relief of  
a brother; and by this shall all men know,  
that we are His disciples.

The last Mosaical precept I shall notice  
runs thus: "Thou shalt in any wise re-  
buke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon  
him." Lev. xix. 17. Affection really  
warm, overlooks no interest of the object  
of its love; and daily are the instances of  
anxiety manifested to secure to persons be-  
loved, the favourable regards of those whose  
patronage may be of use to them in the  
world; the friendship of these they are ad-  
vised

SERMON. vised to cultivate, by all means, against giving any offence to these, are they most earnestly cautioned: or if, through want of such caution, they do forfeit the favour of any who might have assisted them, the persons by whom the caution ought to have been given, are censured, as deficient in that attention which affectionate attachment dictates. Now if the rebuke thus passed be just, surely, in the more important case of offences against God, it becomes an office of charity to reprove, rebuke, exhort; and, in proportion to our belief in the reality of His superintendance, the universality of His providence, the severity of his judgments, and the certainty of His rewards to them who walk in His laws, will naturally be our earnestness to preserve all whom we love from incurring His indignation, or forfeiting His protection. In Christians, therefore, who are taught that the sanctions of the divine commandments are according to the perfection of Him who ordained them, this care will, if our love be real, take place of all others; and were we to act adequately to

to our profession, our conduct would thus SERM.  
be the practice of the noblest of all prin- V.<sup>m</sup>  
ciples under the highest improvement.

Neglect of duty, and transgressions of the law, do, in general, manifestly arise from selfishness; the completion of our duty, and the fulfilling of the law, should, therefore, it should seem, spring from the contrary principle; and a ready and sincere discharge of all the social offices, can be secured only by brotherly love being fixed in our breasts. In deeds of kindness, in acts suggested by benevolence, the heart goes before the hand, and the works of this last seldom equal the wishes of the former. Neither are the merits of the objects of our love scrupulously weighed. If they appear to need our assistance, if an opportunity of obliging them offer, much is easily forgotten, much is immediately forgiven; and by the natural operation of this principle, we become merciful, even as our Father which is in Heaven is merciful, shewing kindness, and conferring favours even on the thankless and ungrateful.

Did

SERM. Did such a principle then reign in the  
v. breasts of all the human race, what a per-  
fect cessation of all injurics, what an unin-  
terrupted exchange of good offices would it  
produce ! What sobriety of conduct, what  
abstinenice would it cause in life ! not only  
on account of the other effects which the  
indulgence of ourselves may have on the  
welfare or comfort of others, but from the  
effectual recollection which would then take  
place, that by refraining from the needless  
expence of time or money, we should be  
enabled to contribute much more largely to  
the assistance of our brethren. None would  
then pine in want, neither would any be  
found friendleſs. The hardships flowing  
from prepoſſeſſion and prejudice would  
ceafe: and the disappointments arising  
from the varying resolves, and the uncer-  
tainty of the attachments of men, would  
be no more; for universal benevolence must  
be without partiality, and sincere love with-  
out hypocriſy.

From

From the perfection of this principle of SERM. action, it may justly be inferred, that if it pleased the Creatour of the world to reveal a rule of life to mankind, this would be found therein: Yet where is it to be met with as the great law of behaviour, that to which all others are reducible, and by their consonance with which they are perfected, but in the Christian Scriptures, or the sayings of those who have borrowed from them? And is it to be believed, that a few fishermen of Galilee could, without supernatural assistance, have discovered and dilated, with the most judicious accuracy, on a maxim, the comprehensive simplicity and excellence of which had escaped the sagacity and earnest researches of the wisest of the Greeks? Or, since they did teach the world this great rule, Did they not, without controversy, in thus delivering their Master's words, speak as never men spake?

To the congruity of this principle to the unvitiated affections and best reasonings of the human mind, the bitterest enemies of

SER.M. the Gospel in our days, have borne most ample and unequivocal testimony, by adopting a pretension to it, as the surest mean of making proselytes to their sect. But while universal benevolence and brotherly love are their ostensible motives, and their professed aim is to make men happy, by making them good, by not practising this principle under the relations they already bear to those around them, they both manifest the hypocrisy of their professions, and yield to all, whose eyes the God of this world hath not blinded, that they should not believe, a fearful lesson against leaving the sure instruction of revelation, for fanciful motives of action. When men, instead of trusting the general happiness of the world to the care of its almighty Governour, absurdly and presumptuously extend their aims beyond the contracted sphere to which their own powers can reach, far from preserving the peace of society, and contributing to the benefit of others, by neglecting the humble, though real duties, of the individual, and affecting a character of extensive import-

importance, which belongs not to them, SERM.  
they disturb the tranquillity of the world,  
and are led to the commission of the most  
unpardonable aggressions, the most enormous crimes. Thus it is that these pretenders to benevolence have signalized themselves by the grossness of their transgression of every one of those commandments, obedience to which the apostle exhorts us to complete, by loving one another.

V.  
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The honour due to parents, and the natural affection subsisting between individuals related by blood, they require all, who are sufficiently infatuated to associate with them absolutely to renounce; thus destroying from among them all obedience to the first of the laws relating to our neighbour; the second of these they set at nought, by putting to death, in any secure way, those who present themselves as powerful opponents to their pretendedly great, though, in truth, nefarious and horridly pernicious projects. The prohibition of adultery, it is well known, they have treated as of no

SERM. authority. And the unestimated plunder,
v. the atrocious robberies of the armies under
the direction of this sect, whose object, it
has been repeatedly declared, is like that of
the sect itself, the destruction of all the
kings of the earth, sufficiently prove, that
their love is not manifested by tenderness
for the property of their neighbours. While
the bitter calumnies with which they pursue
all who attempt to expose their sophistry,
and put men on their guard against their
impious and destructive plans, the railing
accusations they bring against all in autho-
rity, and the distrust they endeavour to sow
among those, who, if united, would be
strong enough to crush their machinations,
convict them, spite of all their pretensions
to benevolence, of bearing false witness.
And, lastly, their covetousness has, it should
seem, been the grand motive for seizing the
wealth, the power, and the first honours of
the countries given by the divine justice
into their hands: so perfectly have they, in
their course, trampled under foot every law
by which the persons, the property, and

the rights of men are secured. Whereas, SERM.
had they in fact rendered, as we are com-
manded, love to every one, not one of these
crimes would have been committed; they
might have been harmless, and the world
have had no complaint against them.

V.

The apostolick injunction before us is, ye may easily perceive, calculated to prevent every aggression, to repress every crime in the very bud; nor could the force of it, for this purpose, be evaded, but by the introduction of a doctrine which St. Paul has forewarned every Christian to consider as holden by those whose damnation is just, that of doing evil that good may come of it. By this detestable tenet, men either arrogate to themselves the power of securing success to their measures, or profanely assert, that God will bless the wicked in their deeds, and patronize the transgressours of His own laws; when reason, experience, and Scripture, all join in teaching, that He who once presumes to break a commandment of the Lord, not only forfeits all claim

SER.M. to, but really loses, in some degree, the
v. divine assistance; that one transgression leads
to another, diminishing our power of re-
sisting temptation, and lessening our abhor-
rence of evil.

Let it be remembered, therefore, that the commandment we have received, to love one another, is universal: and that not merely as to its objects, but in respect likewise to the particulars in which we should manifest this love; in care of the property, respect to the rights, regard to the reputation, and attention to the feelings of our brethren. When we wilfully assault, or obstinately disregard any of these, we break the royal law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" and be the excuses we may pretend, what they may, even if we plead, that we were seeking the honour of God, we are guilty of gross hypocrisy, in affecting to seek His honour through the breach of His commandments. Obedience to these is the mean by which perfect wisdom has ordained, that we should contribute
to

to the general good : and while we mourn SERM.
with those that mourn, and rejoice with ^{v.} ~~v.~~
those that do rejoice, we do not fancifully,
but really contribute, to the general stock
of comfort and happiness, and love not in
word only, but in deed, and in truth.

How to make this the great principle of our conduct, we have received both instruction and encouragement from Him in whom alone, of all the sons of man, our heavenly Father could be well pleased. He, far from becoming an aggressor, shewed His love even to His persecutors, by the patience with which He submitted to all the injuries they heaped on Him. When He was reviled, He reviled not again ; when He suffered, He threatened not ; but pitied us, even when we were His enemies, and underwent miseries that belonged not to Him, that He might relieve us, while we were yet sinners ; and thus pitying us in our lowest state of misery, not of body only, but of soul, extended His solicitude for us beyond the present to a future state ; and

SERM. thus exhibited to the human race a new
v.
subject on which to exercise mutual benevolence, the attainment of happiness in another life. Zeal on this point it is, that particularly distinguishes the Christian. Whether in a private station as a parent, a master, or a friend, or in publick as a member of the commonwealth, or a magistrate, if he have any sense of the inheritance to which he is called with his brethren, he will not cease to rebuke, command, exhort, that men live soberly, righteously, and godly, as holding that blessed hope, and looking for the glorious appearance of Him who having died, that we might live for ever, has commanded us to love one another as He loved us ; And can we do this if we be thoughtless of the future fate, careleſs of the salvation of our brethren ? Herein, then, let our love be made perfect, that we may have boldneſs in the day of judgement ; because as He was, so are we in this world !

SER-

SERMON VI.

ON THE LORD'S SUPPER.

I COR. XI. 26.

*For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink
this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till
He come.*

WE read in the book of Exodus, that SERM.
at the institution of the passover, VI.
Moses commanded the children of Israel,
saying, " And ye shall observe this thing
for an ordinance to thee, and to thy sons,
for ever. And it shall come to pass when
ye be come to the land which the Lord will
give you according as He hath promised,
that ye shall keep this service. And it shall
come to pass when your children shall say
unto you, What mean you by this service ?
That

SER.M. That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the
VI. Lord's passover, who passed over the houses
of the children of Israel in Egypt, when
He smote the Egyptians, and delivered our
houses." Now as the Israelites were thus
taught to observe this service, and to in-
struct their posterity both in the observance
of it, and its meaning; so we Christians
have been enjoined by Him who is the true
Lamb of God, and of whom the paschal
Lamb was but a type, ever to observe a
service which He ordained, and the mean-
ing of which is given us in the words of
the text by one who received it from the
Lord Himself. " As often as ye eat this
bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the
Lord's death till he come:" and thus as the
Israelites, by celebrating their passover, ac-
knowledged the deliverance which God
wrought for them, when He smote the first
born of Egypt, we, by celebrating the
supper of the Lord, acknowledge and com-
memorate the deliverance from sin and
death, obtained for all who would accept
it, by the sufferings and death of the Son
of

of God. As long, therefore, as we retain SERM.
any proper sense of the deliverance thus VI.
wrought for us, as long as we entertain
any just idea of the salvation thus pur-
chased, so long it might be thought, we
should readily join with pleased and grate-
ful hearts in the service ordained for its
commemoration. And if, in fact, the pre-
sent conduct of many Christians wears a
different aspect, it may, without injustice,
be presumed, that "their love is grown
cold," and that they no longer know how
to estimate the infinite mercy of God in
their redemption, nor the unspeakable love
of His Son in becoming a willing ransom
for them.

Lest this censure should seem harsh, I
will now consider before you, the institu-
tion itself, and the end and uses of it, with
the obligations thence arising to attend on
it: and I am persuaded, from such a re-
view, it will appear, that however the
conscientious scruples of some few honest,
though weak Christians, who are ever ap-
prehensive

SERM. prehensive of being totally unfit to approach
VI. the Lord's table, may plead in their excuse,
yet much the greater part of those who
absent themselves from it, can set up no de-
fence but what will prove their own crimi-
nality.

When our Lord was now about to lay down his life for the sins of the world, and while He was celebrating with His apostles the deliverance which the stock from whence He came, according to the flesh, had experienced in Egypt, He called their attention to a still more important deliverance, even that He was then going to accomplish for all the human race. For taking bread, and having blessed it, He brake it, and gave it unto them, saying, “Take, eat, this is my body, which is given for you.” Having taken the cup too, and given thanks, He gave them that likewise, that they all should drink of it, adding, “This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many. This do ye as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of me.” Such was the in-
stitution

stitution of the Lord's supper, before it had ~~SER.M.~~
been, by the enthusiasm of some, and crafti- ^{VI.}
ness of others, worked up into a tremendous
mystery, and adorned with trappings to at-
tract the admiration of the ignorant, and
strike terror into the weak ; and if we view
it as such, we can never sufficiently admire
either its simplicity, its wonderful signifi-
cance, or that spirit of unexampled love
that shines throughout it.

For what could be more plain, what farther removed from all probability of being changed into a superstitious ceremony, than the breaking of bread, and the drinking of wine ? Acts which occur every day, and to which, from their so frequently occurring, it was the less likely any particular meaning, but what was expressly declared, should ever be annexed. What requisition could the dying Master have made to his disciples, the compliance with which would have been less burdensome, or less difficult to be continued ? While the receiving of the bread and wine does so aptly apply to the thing
for

SERM. for which it was ordained, a commemorative sign, that the most uninformed follower of Christ cannot but comprehend its significance. Bread is the principal sustenance of human life, the chief support of our bodies; wine is the invigorater of our spirits, the restorer of warmth and cheerfulness, after they have been banished by affliction or disease. Is it not then with peculiar propriety that these gifts of Heaven, by which our natural life is chiefly maintained, are made the representatives of that body and blood, by which our spiritual life must be supported, of which, if a man eat and drink, he shall live for ever, and of which, except we do eat and drink, we have no life abiding in us.

Behold a man, whose body is worn by fatigue, and emaciated by fasting, whose spirits are lowered by disease, or oppressed by sorrow; to such an one let the natural refreshments of bread and wine be imparted; his body recovers strength, his spirits revive, his countenance is gladdened: behold
the

the sinner deep sunk in guilt and terrour, SERM.
his love of, and holy confidence in God, vi. 
changed into Fordid fear, his good principles and virtuous inclinations languishing,
and his hopes of salvation near expiring ;
but see such an one washed in the blood of
his Saviour, and made partaker of the benefits of his death, the languid flame of piety
revives, encouraged by the hope of favourable acceptance, and all necessary assistance,
he diligently cultivates every virtuous inclination ; and steadily applies himself to
the practice of every good work ; and daily gathering fresh strength to run the race
which is set before him, he aspires after
that immortality of which he has here received the earnest.

But the similarity of the effects of our natural and spiritual food is not the only point in which the admirable significance of this sacred institution is apparent ; for there prevails in it, too, a most powerful recommendation of that last and new commandment which our Lord, on the same night,

gave

SERM. gave to his disciples ; that they should love
VI.
one another.

To partake of the same food, and drink of the same cup, have ever been esteemed tokens of unreserved friendship : and to bring men to spend those hours of ease and frankness together, has generally been thought a great step toward conciliating their minds, and uniting them in the bands of mutual regard. But with how much more reason may we expect the same effects, when the repast of which they partake is made with a peculiar meaning ? when all to whom the same bread, and same cup, are communicated, acknowledge by partaking of them, one baptism, one faith, one Lord ; confess that the great pursuit of their lives is the same, that their hopes are raised on the same foundation, and their conduct regulated by the same law ; and that one great commandment of this law is that which insists on the exercise of universal charity and brotherly love unfeigned ? And while the unity of our faith is thus signified,

fied, and the strictness of those bands of ^{SERM.} affection, in which all the true members of ^{VI.} Christ's church are holden together, expressed ; the unparalleled love of their Saviour appears, through the same institution, with the fullest lustre ; for greater love than this hath no man, that he should lay down his life for his friends ; yet when our Lord was about to shew such love, He enhanced the obligation on his disciples, (if it be possible that it could be enhanced) by the manner in which He directed them to commemorate it : no costly sacrifice has He required, no rigorous mortification has He enjoined : to do that only in remembrance of Him which may be of the highest use to ourselves ; so to recal to our minds His mercies, as may render us capable of receiving all the benefits of them, and so to keep Him in mind while absent, that we may not be ashamed to meet Him when He shall come again, is the sum of this His precept !

SERM. And shall we persuade ourselves that it
VI. is a matter of indifference whether we comply with such a precept? Or shall we, like some who call themselves Christians, say the command is spiritual only, and, under that pretence, neglect to obey it? Or shall we not rather, following the dictates of common sense and sober piety towards our Redeemer, endeavour to learn, from the consideration of the ends and uses of the institution, the obligations incumbent on ourselves to observe it?

The apostle tells us, that by this service we shew the Lord's death until He come; that we from time to time recal to our own minds, and testify to others our belief, that Christ suffered for our redemption; that we express the grateful sense we retain of this His love towards us; and testify our firm expectation, that He who already hath appeared in the form of a servant, and patiently borne persecution, misery and contempt, for our sakes, will again appear in glory, to reward with life and happiness eternal,

eternal, those who have obeyed the laws SERM.
He delivered, and followed the example He VI.
set, and to take vengeance on the despisers
of His cross, and the enemies of His
church.

Now if such be the end of the appointment, if the thus confirming of our faith, and the keeping alive of our gratitude and our hopes be uses of complying with it, (even were they the only ones) How could we neglect to do so, and yet stand excused? Are the mercies of Christ unworthy of remembrance? Is your faith so firm that it needs no additional strength to enable it to repel all the fiery darts of the wicked one? Are the benefits ye have received so deeply infixed in your hearts, that ye want nothing to recal you to a due sense of them? Or is your expectation of your Lord so lively, is your vigilance so great, that ye stand ever prepared to meet Him, and need not be reminded that He is near, even at the doors? But great as these uses are, much as I apprehend we all stand in need of such

SER.M. assistance, the confirming of our faith, the
VI. keeping alive of our hopes by this act of commemoration, can never be the whole benefit to be derived from duly participating of this holy sacrament. Since our Lord hath said, “ He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him ; and as the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.” Words which, when compared with those of the apostle, “ the cup of blessing which we bless, Is it not the communion of the blood of Christ : the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ ?” seem to convey to the true and worthy communicant, who does by faith feed on Him in his heart, and by this act shew forth that faith, a sure promise that the receiving of the bread and wine, of which he partakes, being verily and indeed accompanied by a participation of the body and blood of Christ, which, by these their symbols, he spiritually eateth and drinketh, (and spiritually only it should

ever

ever be remembered, according to those words of our Saviour to His disciples, when He had told them that so they must do, “ It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing ; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life”) the participation of them, I say, shall be unto him the means of his becoming, in truth, alive unto righteousness, of his receiving such a portion of the spirit of Christ, as shall enable him to overcome all intemperate passions, and cleanse his heart from all evil inclinations, and prove in him a fountain of piety, holiness, and righteousness : blessed effects, which the goodness and power of God can as well annex to the due and sincere performance of this religious act, as He could cleanse the Syrian from his leprosy, by washing seven times in Jordan !

Let not, then, the plain and simple means by which these great and lasting benefits are conveyed, offend us ! but let us rather glorify the wisdom, and acknowledge the love

SERM. of our Master, who hath, by this one institution so easy of observance, provided for the confirmation of our faith, the conservation of our hopes, the encrease of our piety and holiness, and the improvement of our souls, as well as for preserving, in His church, that bond of peace and charity, in which He hath commanded all who would be truely His disciples, ever to be found. Since, to prevent the Christian, who is rich in this world's goods, from being proud of his opulence, and despising his poor brother, and to preserve this from being stung with envy at the prosperity of the other, What more apt could be devised than inviting both to the same table, where seeing that He who is equally the Lord of both has no respect of persons, they may learn rightly to estimate the present trifling difference that their lots in this world make between them, and as fellow-servants of the same Master, and expecting their last reward from the same hand, chearfully proceed together through the performance of the different tasks allotted them?

Such,

Such, then, being the institution, such SERM.
the end and uses for which it was appointed, VI.
To what shall we ascribe that very great
and criminal neglect of it which is at pre-
sent visible among us? To ignorance of
the command it cannot be imputed; for
sufficiently plain to all is the precept, "Do
this in remembrance of me." Neither can
the difficulty of compliance be more justly
alleged, since than that nothing can be
more easy: and I should hope there are
none so hardy as to esteem their Saviour's
sufferings unworthy their recollection, or
to imagine they stand in no need of the
assistance of His Spirit to perfect the work
of their salvation. To what, then, shall
we attribute it? in part to want of con-
sidering the importance of the duty; and
in part to a consciousness of leading such
lives as renders them unworthy to join in a
service so sacred. To you who have hitherto
absented yourselves from the former of these
causes, I trust enough has been already said
to convince you of your error; and for
you, who sensible of the sinfulness of your

I 4 conduct,

SERM. conduct, thence dare not approach this holy
VI. table, let me beseech you to reflect, while
ye yet have power to reflect, since ye find
ye cannot serve at once Christ and Belial,
whose service ye should in wisdom choose?
Christ hath commanded you to commemo-
rate His death; this, ye say, the impurity
of your lives renders you unworthy to do:
but Christ hath also commanded you, to
repent and cleanse yourselves from sin. Can
your disobedience to this command serve as
a plea for your neglect of the other? Or
does not your unworthiness, by being volun-
tary, become criminal also? St. Peter did,
on the plea of unworthiness, once hesitate
to comply with his Lord's will, in a case,
too, in which such hesitation must (if it
ever could be so) have been pardonable; But
what was our Saviour's judgement of it?
“ If I wash thee not, thou hast no part
with me.”

He who instituted the feast is the best
judge of the qualifications of those who
come to it; and the only one He requires
in

in us is, that we be his disciples, and con- SERM.
tinue in his words. If we become sincerely VI.
such, if we thus live in the true practice
of what He hath enjoined, the shewing his
death by this holy communion, will prove
to us a source of comfort inexpressible; for
we shall then look for the day of his coming
as for that of the arrival of the beloved and
gracious Master of the family of which
we are members, in whom are placed our
hopes of deliverance from whatever evils
we may at present feel, and our expectation
of peace, security, and perfect happiness.
But if our love in this world, if our un-
willingness to part with enjoyments that are
forbidden, or to practise the self-denial,
which religion in some cases requires, in-
duces us to reject the call, and despise the
invitation which the Lord hath given us,
What will be our confusion of face, when
He appears! Think, How shall we then
meet Him, with whose request so affec-
tionately made, and accompanied with every
circumstance to give it effect, we have thus
.obstinately refused to comply! What sen-
tence

SERM. tence can we then expect from Him? What
VI.  but the condemnation of those who are
lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God,
everlasting banishment from the presence of
Him whose mercies we have thus con-
temned, and all the miseries consequent on
the wrath of God and the Lamb? Of the
power to avoid these, ye are yet possessed;
how long ye may continue so, God alone
knows; but if ye have any gratitude for
the benefits ye have already received, any
knowledge of the terrore of the Lord, any
care of your own salvation, delay no longer
to make use of it; repent and cleanse your-
selves from sin; prepare to receive the cup
of salvation, and call on the name of the
Lord!

SERMON VII.

ON THE LAST JUDGEMENT.

REV. XX. 12.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

THE very interesting and most aweful SERM.
scene, thus revealed by the angel of ^{VII.}
his Lord to the beloved disciple John, has
so manifest a claim to our attention, that it
should seem needless to preface a discourse
on it with any of the customary exhortations,
that ye would seriously listen to the words
now

SERM. now to be addressed unto you. In subjects
VII. on which we sometimes speak, a part only
of our hearers may necessarily appear to
themselves concerned : with admonitions
against theft, and the various acts of dis-
honesty, those whose opulence removes from
them all temptation to such instances of
guilt, may think, they have little concern.
With diffusion from oppression, and the
abuse of power, those who have none be-
low them over whom they can tyrannize,
may conceive, they have nothing to do.
But in the judgement which all must un-
dergo, all are interested ; and if we con-
sider mankind as distributed under the two
great divisions of those, who hope to be
acquitted, and those, who fear to be con-
demned, the latter cannot but be affected
with horrour at the mention of that solemn
day in which the Son of man, seated on
the throne of His glory, shall say unto
those on His left hand, “ Depart from me,
ye accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared
for the devil and his angels : ” nor the
former, without a degree of extasy, anti-
cipate

cipate that hour of triumph, when the SERM.
King immortal, awarding them crowns of ^{VII.}
glory, shall say unto those on His right
hand, “ Come, ye blessed children of my
Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for
you from the beginning of the world.”
To encourage these to continue stedfast, im-
moveable, and always abounding in the
work which will secure to each of them
that crown which the Lord, the righteous
Judge, will give to all that love His ap-
pearance, and to raise in those the proper
fruits of the fears with which they now
look forward to the day of trial, sincere
repentance, and timely preparation to meet
their God, are the ends of calling their
thoughts to that time when “ the judge-
ment shall sit, and the books be opened.”

It is well known to those who are ac-
quainted with the history of this part of
the world, when it was sunk in paganism,
.that some wise and good men did, in the
very nature of things, discover ground of
assurance, that men would, after this life,

be

SER.M. be differently recompensed, according to
VII. their works : the Gospel hath fully brought
to light the doctrine on which they could
form only uncertain conjectures ; and con-
firmed both the hopes and fears of nature,
by authoritatively declaring, that “ God
hath appointed a day in which He will
judge the world in righteousness ;” and
that the concluding act of the dispensations
of the Deity, in respect to this globe, will
be gathering together all the inhabitants of
it, to receive a sentence which shall decide
on their future situation, and make it for
ever suitable to their conduct past ; and the
sacred writers strive to impress this expec-
tation on our minds, by mentioning several
particulars of the solemn process, repre-
sented to us by images taken from human
judicatures, and thus justly expressing to
our understandings, circumstances, on the
natural effect of which on our own minds,
we may ourselves determine. Of these
circumstances, the principal are included in
the text, in speaking to which it is my in-
tention to confine my discourse to the con-
sideration

sideration of what must naturally be the ~~SERM.~~
different feelings of the wicked, and of the ~~VII.~~
righteous, when affected by the actual pre-
sence of them ; not meaning, however, to
restrain myself from adverting to other pas-
sages of scripture, which may contribute
to elucidate any thing but generally men-
tioned in this.

“ And I saw, saith the evangelist, the dead, small and great, stand before God.” Our blessed Saviour, in His own description of this solemnity, particularises the glorious train of the Almighty, that innumerable company of angels, which by thousands of thousands minister unto Him. Behold then the assembly, before which ye must one day appear, and without the terrors of guilt to add to his confusion, What man is there among us, that could face such a tribunal, and not be appalled ? Consider who will be on the throne ; God His self ; And will not His excellency make you afraid ? While it is difficult to conceive, it is *impos-
sible to describe*, what must then be the ter-
rours,

SERM. viii. hours, the distress, and the anguish of the infidel and the blasphemer, when beholding the brightness of His glory, whose vengeance they have so often dared, whose existence they have so repeatedly denied, they find themselves at length really summoned to answer, face to face, for all the hard speeches they have spoken against Him.

Here we may well borrow the apostle's language, and ask, If those who obey the Gospel shall then hardly be saved, where shall the ungodly appear? If ye who have professed Christ in the world, who have acknowledged the authority, and joined in the worship of God, can only, with trembling hearts, approach His judgement seat; if ye who have constantly expected, and faithfully waited for it, find this, indeed, the great and the terrible day of the Lord; What will it be to those whom it overtaketh unawares; who believe not its approach, and who now mock at its terrors? On the haughty minds of those self-sufficient reasoners,

soners, with whom all faith is prejudice, SERM.
all devotion superstition, all religion bigotry, VII.
the shock produced when they find the
sophistry in which they trusted refuted by
fact, the belief they rejected justified, the
fears they affected to despise realized, must
be such as fully to answer that prophetic
description given of the extremity of the
dismay and confusion of the enemies of
God and Christ, in their “ saying to the
mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and
hide us from the face of Him that sitteth
on the throne, and from the wrath of the
Lamb ; for the great day of His wrath is
come, and who shall be able to stand.” To
the thoughtless hearts of the profligate,
who have been wont to treat as dupes all
who submit to the restraints of the Gospel,
the alarm raised by the awfulness of His
visible presence, of whose sanctions and
menaces they used to make so light, must
exceed, beyond all comparison, the most
sudden and the heaviest stroke which dis-
appointment, danger, and affliction in this
life, can produce.

SERM. Yet horrible as the first sensations of these
VII. two descriptions of sinners must be on the disclosure of this tremendous scene, their poignancy must encrease, when they more closely compare the majesty and power of Him before whom they are arraigned, with the insults which they have offered to His dignity, and the disregard they have shewn to His authority. Neither will the crucifiers only of the Saviour of the world then be abashed at looking on Him whom they pierced; confusion of face will also be the just and inevitable portion of all who have rejected, all who have denied, all who have been backward to confess Christ before men: For how will such lift up their eyes to Him, to whom they preferred the favour of the world? When the smile of encouragement, and the clamour of applause, uttered by dissolute companions, shall no more support their confidence? How will those who are wont with profane witticisms, to reflect on the truth, and ridicule the doctrine of Jesus, or even those who, with complacency, listen to these insolent

folent returns of contempt for mercy, and SERM.
enmity for love, when all being too intent
on the wretchednes of their own situation
to bestow a thought on others, the number
of associates in sin shall ceafe to embolden,
be able to stand in His prefence? While,
by the latenes of the period at which they
are brought to a ſeafe of their guilt, they
ſhall be precluded from even ſaying with
Job, “ I have heard of Thee by the hear-
ing of the ear: but now mine eye feeth
Thee. Wherefore I abhor myſelf, and re-
pent in dust and ashes !”

Now although I would hope that no one
prefent has reaſon to dread the being in-
volved in the condemnation of the un-
believer or the ſcoffer, yet ſince it is of much
more importance to us to conſider, what is
likely to befall ourſelves, than what others
will have to undergo; let me ask, Will it not
then, think ye, recur to your minds, that
ye ourſelves have not, in every instance,
manifested love ſo true, fidelity ſo ſincere,
or obedience ſo conſtant, as is juſtly due to

SERM. so great and so glorious a Master ? Will
 VII. not those trespasses, so inconsistent with
 ~ humble piety, unfeigned faith, and real
 love of God, which ye now recollect, and
 to which I am now endeavouring to awaken
 your consciences, solely with a view of in-
 ducing you to judge yourselves, that ye
 may not be judged by the Lord, then press
 themselves upon your mind ? Reflect, there-
 fore, in what instances ye have withholden
 the homage due, in what insulted the Ma-
 jesty, in what betrayed a backwardness to
 profess the truth of God ; nay, in what
 even mistrusted His goodness ; assured, that
 His appearance will recal all these things
 to your remembrance, and thus, at present,
 take to yourselves a salutary shame for
 offences, which, if not previously repented
 of, will, in that day, force shame indelible
 upon you.

The next particular of the text claiming
 our consideration, is that of the persons we
 are to meet before this supreme tribunal ;
 “ the dead, small and great :” in whom
 must

must necessarily be included all we have SERM.
injured in any manner, either by personal VII.
attack or oppression, by robbery or fraud,
by calumny or insult, or even by wilful
neglect. All these will rise up in judge-
ment against us. And think, if we cannot
now meet any one by whom we have dealt
harshly, or to whom we have offered affront
without being covered with confusion,
through the consciousness of our miscon-
duct, What will be the disturbance of our
minds, when, in the presence of God and
His holy angels, we are at once confronted
with all who have just cause of complaint
against us !

Here all ranks of men, those of every
relation in society, may with propriety,
should in charity, be called on to review,
with the most serious impartiality, their
past conduct, and their present habits ; to
examine themselves whether they have ren-
dered to all their dues ? Whether they con-
tinue to owe no man any thing, but to love
one another ? and if in this their hearts

SERM. condemn them not, then may they have
VII. confidence towards God, and boldnes in
the day of judgement. But if their love
exist only in word or in tongue, and not in
deed and in truth, such will their own
hearts condemn ; And how then shall they
appear before Him, Who is greater than
our hearts, and knoweth all things ? How
stand when those who were the objects of
their feigned love, have to exhibit against
them all the effects of deadly hatred ? The
general happiness, the good of mankind,
are pleas to which we know, from experi-
ence, the tyrant and the oppressour are
equal ; and they are pleas of love. Yet
how will these pretenders support their
pleas, when all who have been slaughtered
through their ambition, all who have suf-
fered by their exactious, all who have been
afflicted by their oppression, shall with
themselves appear before that judgement-
seat, where there will be no respect of per-
sons ? Had the wicked only been subjects
of their cruelty, yet those unjustly treated
would rise again to their confusion ; but
when

when the harmless victims to their passions, SERM.
or what is more, when those whom they ^{VII.}
persecuted for professing the truth, and
practising righteousness, for obeying God
rather than man, shall present themselves
before the throne of the universal Judge,
how low then will the loftiest countenance
fall ; when those by whom they so little
expected to be any more disturbed, whom
they imagined they had finally crushed,
shall, in reality, as the guilty Herod ground-
lessly fancied of the holy Baptist, be risen
from the dead ; how will the mighty ones
of the earth, who have so abused their
power, be covered with astonishment and
terrour !

Compared with the total number of the race, few indeed are those, who have the opportunity of making whole nations feel the weight of their power, or the cruelty of their characters ; still there are others, who within the limits of their influence or authority, narrow as they may be, are both rigorous and inexorable in their demands

SER.M. on those below them; from whom a de-
fenceless opponent finds no mercy; but who
vii. pursue, with unrelenting malice, those who
have once incurred their resentment: against
those petty tyrants, and other like species
of oppreffours, who, in fundry ways, take
advantage of the unprotected state of the
helpless to practise extortion upon them,
there are, in holy writ, and especially in
the book of Psalms, many appeals to the
future judgement of the Lord: when He
shall sit to decide on these appeals, and
those who, under the justest causes of com-
plaint here, were put to silence, shall meet
their Oppreffours before His throne, ye
will hardly think that the dismay of these
latter will prove such as could be too
strongly expressed by any words in which
I could endeavour to convey an image of it.
Pursue the same thought even through
more distinct particulars, and ye will thereby
gain a juster and a more impressive idea
of the horrores with which the guilty and
impenitent must necessarily be surrounded
in the day of retribution: horrores, from
which

which nothing but such repentance as we SERM.
are confcious is sincere, and firm faith in ^{VII.}
God for its acceptance, can preserve those
who have suffered themselves to become
transgressours. Ye are sensible, that even
fictitious scenes of divine vengeance will
most powerfully affect the human mind ;
ye know, from experience, that when the
tragick poet presents to the murtherer's eyes
the apparition of the slaughtered sufferer,
even the seeming terrors of the feigned
criminal are, to a degree, contagious : from
hence, then, ye may partly learn to estimate
the distressful sensations of the real mur-
therer, when he, who the last time he be-
held him, was expiring under his relentless
hands, shall be called from the grave, and
by his very presence pray a sentence from
their common Judge.

Let not, however, the approaching situa-
tion of the criminals already noticed, dread-
ful as it is, absorb all your attention ; the
future feelings of the robber and fraudulent,
deservedly claim some of it. For as these,
like

SERM. like the former, frequently contract an hardness of heart, which fortifies them against shame and remorse during the whole of their continuance on earth, so must the severity of the shock which they will experience, when this fancied security is suddenly done away by the appearance of those they have wronged before the throne of God, be proportioned to their former obduracy. Numerous are the publick robberies, but still more so are the secret thefts of which the guilty never have, nor in this world ever will be discovered; yet both these combined are outnumbered by the frauds that escape human detection: for the consciences of the criminals remonstrate not loudly enough at present to betray them. Let such, however, recollect, while they are in the way with their adverfaries, that unless they now repent, and make reparation, or if this be out of their power, at least do the former with sincerity, when they shall hereafter meet them before an all-seeing Judge, the craft through which they have here lain concealed, the subterraneous

fuges and false pleas by which they now SERM.
strive to quiet the misgivings of their own VII.
hearts, being no longer of avail, the sight
of those whom they have pillaged, or on
whom they have imposed, will at once har-
row up their souls, and put an end for ever
to that deceitful calm by which they were
 lulled to their destruction.

Neither ought the probable sensations of another tribe to be passed over unnoticed ; those, I mean, who delight in what may justly be termed the mischief of the tongue. Many are there in the world who suffer in their reputation, in their peace, and in their fortunes, from idle tales, false reports, or malicious suggestions, the authours of which continue unknown, and in numerous cases even unsuspected ; but of whom it is almost equally difficult to say, what pleasure they can now find in the wrongs they commit, and the unhappiness they occasion, and what pangs they will feel, when those whose secret enemies they have been, shall with them stand, ready to receive the final sentence

S E R M. sentence from Him who judgeth rightly !

VII. Sufficiently severe ye will undoubtedly conceive, must be the afflicting sense that even these criminals will then have of their own deserts, and of the disgrace and condemnation impending over them : but all consideration of their distressful feelings, will vanish on the mention of those which, in the same hour, will be the portion of others who have employed their speech to still more pernicious purposes ; the men, I mean, whose powers of persuasion have been exerted in misleading the ignorant and unwary into transgression, or in seducing the unsuspecting and innocent from the paths of righteousness. When the victims which the nefarious cruelty of such have immolated to their passions, shall, by the agonizing terrors with which they anticipate the sentence due to their own crimes, bear testimony to the deeper guilt of those who caused them to offend, the lashes with which the seducers will then be scourged by their consciences must, ye are sensible, prove such as no comparison drawn from the

the scorpion whips, with which the most SERM.
inventive poets have armed their feigned VII.
ministers of vengeance, can reach ; it is
inspiration alone that will supply an ade-
quate image, by teaching us to call their
sufferings the commencement of everlasting
burnings.

Still there is an aggravation that may be added even to the mental sufferings of these ; an aggravation which may at first, perhaps, occur to only a few among you ; but in your opinion of which, when once mentioned, all will unite : it is in cafes where the persons so miserably betrayed to their own ruin, had peculiar claims to the protection of the very wretches that seduced them. This stroke, ye may justly think, carries the picture of human infamy to its utmost height, and, consequently, prognosticates the most acute misery in the breast of the guilty, when the blood of those, who through them perish in their iniquities, is about to be required at their hands. But, alas ! for the human race ! How great simili-

SERM. similitude to this transgression is born by
VII. conduct that prevails far and wide among
us! For are not those betrayed into sin by
the very persons who are most strictly
bound to guard them against transgression;
whose trespasses are owing to the want of
the instruction and discipline which their
parents have neglected to give them? And
are not those, indeed, seduced into it, whom
the bad example of their parents has, from
their infancy, taught and encouraged to
trample on the laws of God? Consider,
therefore, while the reflection can produce
something more beneficial to yourselves than
ineffectual remorse, what anguish will, in
that day, pierce the hearts of those parents
who receive from their children trembling
on the brink of the gulph of everlasting
perdition, a glance of reproach, charging
them with being the authours of the end-
less misery into which their unhappy off-
spring are going to be plunged. Let high
and low, rich and poor, listen to the calls
thus made on them, to pay every attention
that can prevent their children from taking

the paths of error and of vice—let them SERM.
no longer prefer fashion to christianity ; nor
the chance of their success in this world,
to the hope of their everlasting happiness
in the next. Let not the imbecility of your
own minds ruin them by indulgence ; much
less permit the contagion of your example
to draw them from the narrow path of
virtue—but check every propensity to these
things by recollecting, that the day is ap-
proaching, when the guilt of them would
draw on you looks of unutterable complaint
from those to whom ye have given birth,
reproaching you with nothing less than
having changed the existence of them who
looked up to you as the guides, because ye
were the authours of their lives, into an
everlasting curse.

Although inexpressible, as ye already per-
ceive, must be the confusion and distress of
the guilty arising from the single circum-
stance of being brought to face all who
have just cause of complaint against them,
yet we cannot appreciate the wretchedness
of

SERM. of their situation as we ought, without
vii. taking into consideration the next circum-
~~~~~stance mentioned in the text; that of those  
books being opened, in which the things  
as yet unknown to the persons against  
whom they were committed, are contained.  
But the feelings necessarily to be produced  
by the certain expectation of such a disclo-  
sure, must be considered on some future  
opportunity. I can detain you no longer at  
present than to beseech you immediately to  
turn to that line of conduct, which is pre-  
scribed by the knowledge of the circum-  
stances laid before you in the present dis-  
course, “that the Lord hath prepared His  
seat unto judgement,” and that those who  
sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.  
Even while I have been speaking to them,  
it may possibly have occurred, that in re-  
spect to some persons towards whom ye  
have neglected it, it is no longer in your  
power to follow our blessed Lord’s direc-  
tion, if thy brother have ought against thee,  
go first, be reconciled unto him. Let there-  
fore the uncertainty of your being able to  
make

make reparation for any future trespasses, SERM.  
and your consciousness that it is impossible VII.  
to do so for some that are past, have their  
due effects in teaching you caution and  
humility, that through the former ye may  
avoid adding to your guilt, and by the  
latter, deprecate that indignation which  
your misconduct hath already merited. This  
admonition is applicable to us all. But for  
any who may be conscious of any of the  
more atrocious instances of guilt to which  
I have alluded, let such take the only me-  
thod of escaping the misery of which I  
have been endeavouring to give you an use-  
ful, though I could attain to the description  
of no other than a most inadequate and  
faint idea ; let them follow the example of  
the holy psalmist, in immediate and sincere  
repentance ; let them call their own ways  
to remembrance, and make haste, and turn  
their feet unto the testimonies of the Lord,  
“ Because He cometh, because he cometh  
to judge the world with righteousness, and  
the people with His truth.”



## SERMON VIII.

## ON THE LAST JUDGEMENT.

REV. XX. 12.

*And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God ; and the books were opened : and another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*

WHEN I before addressed you on this SERM.  
aweful and important subject, I pro- VIII.  
posed to confine my discourse to an enquiry  
into, what feelings must naturally be excited  
in our minds by each of the circumstances,  
which the evangelist has enumerated in the  
words of the text; and I accordingly, at  
that time, proceeded to investigate those  
L 2 which,

SERM. which, we must suppose, will arise on  
VIII. finding ourselves arraigned before the throne  
of God, and confronted with all to whom  
we have, in this life, given just cause of  
complaint against us. The next to be con-  
sidered are the sensations which we must  
expect to experience on the opening of the  
records of our conduct : these, indeed, the  
sinners, with an high hand, those who have  
learned to make a mock at sin, may defy,  
as thinking themselves past what they are  
pleased to call such weakness ; but in all  
others, the very sense of shame justifies a  
hope of their repentance, and yields encou-  
ragement to suppose, that in many breasts  
serious consideration of what all who will  
not prepare in time to meet that day, must  
then undergo, may produce the most bene-  
ficial effects.

Suppose yourselves at once, then, in the  
situation described, the secrets of your hearts  
going to be disclosed, and God about to  
judge openly not only all your actions and  
every word, but the concealed motives of  
these,

these, those inmost thoughts of your breasts SERM.  
which ye have never ventured even to VIII.  
whisper to a friend. For of all these our  
blessed Lord and His apostles have assured  
us we shall render account: “ There is  
nothing covered, that shall not be revealed ;  
neither hid, that shall not be known. What-  
soever ye have spoken in darkness, shall be  
heard in the light, in the day when God  
shall judge the secrets of man by Jesus  
Christ, according to the Gospel.”

The certain assurance of such an exami-  
nation will raise in our minds reflections on  
the impurity and guilt of the natural man,  
that will convince us of the absolute neces-  
sity of expiation and sanctification by some  
means far above our own power, and, con-  
sequently, dispose us gladly to receive those  
which God hath been pleased to appoint,  
the blood of His Son, and the grace of His  
Holy Spirit ; that our sins being blotted  
out in that day, we may not be partakers  
of the agonizing feelings then excited by  
the manifestation of deeds, the perpetrators

SERM. of which, by escaping the knowledge of  
VIII. the world, have been misled into a deceitful  
hope, that their crimes would lie ever con-  
cealed. For how will every wretch then,  
to whose undivulged crimes neither remis-  
sion has been granted on repentance, nor  
amendment produced by merciful correc-  
tion, be seized with terror at the discovery  
made of his iniquities ! How will those  
who have encouraged themselves in sin, by  
saying, “ No man shall see us,” be con-  
founded, when the volumes of transgression  
are opened !

Let but each of the guilty recollect what  
crime it is that he most earnestly wishes to  
keep concealed from the world, then let  
him lay it to his heart, that this very fault,  
of the discovery of which the least danger  
now fills his breast with tormenting anxiety,  
shall then be brought to light before the  
whole assembly of heaven and of earth ;  
and it may be hoped, the anticipated hor-  
rors he will feel, will produce the most  
fervent exertions to prevent, by sincere con-  
trition

trition and real reformation, the actual dis- SERM.  
grace and unbounded misery, which will <sup>VIII.</sup> otherwise burst like a tempest upon him.

“ The word of God,” faith St. Paul,  
“ is quick and powerful, and sharper than  
any two-edged sword, piercing even to the  
dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of  
the joints and marrow, and is a Discerner  
of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”  
Now this truth is more especially experi-  
enced by us, when those passages of holy  
writ are repeated, in which mention is made  
of the last judgement: the word of God  
then, indeed, directs all our attention to the  
danger of our own situation, sends us into  
ourselves, and turns up to our view all  
those trespasses which lay buried in our  
hearts under the cares or the pleasures of  
life. Do not ye yourselves now bear wit-  
ness to the justice of these assertions? Are  
not the thoughts of each of you, at this  
moment, employed on those secret sins  
which I am warning you God will then set  
in the light of His countenance? Consider,

SERM. therefore, the unpleasantness of your pre-  
VIII. sent feelings as but a very slight foretaste  
of those which await the careless, the ob-  
stinate, the impenitent, when deeds now  
unsuspected shall be proclaimed, authours  
of mischief now unaccused discovered, and  
the most mysterious transactions of this life  
unravelled, and all the actors in them  
charged with their peculiar guilt.

It is in this world often used as a consola-  
tion by the friends of those who have  
committed any shameful deed, that the dis-  
grace of the culprit will be known only to  
a few, that industry and caution will pre-  
vent the fame of it reaching far—But how  
short a time will this studied concealment  
last! the veil which the partial benevolence  
of earthly friends thus spreads, will, by the  
justice of the heavenly Judge, quickly be  
torn asunder! Men much experienced in  
the ways of the world, are now wont to  
deem the earth little better than one con-  
tinued scene of imposition; But what will  
it appear, then, when to the pretended con-  
fidence

fidence of many of the enemies of religion, will be opposed private acts of a fear worthy to be laughed at ; when past reputation for sanctity, self-denial, meekness, and other virtues, shall at once vanish on the disclosure of deeds which shall leave the guilty no higher honour than that of excelling in dissimulation, and not too, perhaps, without the additional mortification of having themselves declared the authours of evils, of which they theirselves entertained no idea, when they ventured on the transgressions that caused them ! Of this, at least, I conceive we need have little doubt in regard to that vice which, in the apostle's phrase, sets the world on fire, the misuse of the tongue, when the circumspection expressed by, " I would not have it known that I was the person who said it," can no longer be of avail. When the authour of every slander, the wilful propagator of every calumny shall be dragged to light, when those who with mischievous ingenuity have devised, and with malicious joy watched over the success of false reports to another's hurt,

SERM. hurt, shall, by the records of Heaven, be  
VIII. convicted of these diabolical practices,  
which they had safely carried on in defiance  
of human enquiry, their confusion must  
be such that any attempt to describe it  
would demonstrate a most inadequate sense  
of its greatness. For will not all who have  
by their means been misled, and induced to  
believe or retail their fictions, all who  
thereby have been brought to act with dis-  
trust or unkindness to those who were falsely  
accused, all who in any way suffered by  
the disagreements and contests which their  
falsities occasioned, stand as appealing against  
them to Him before whom the false tongue  
is an abomination?

But if, in such distress the lying lips  
shall begin to have their reward, What por-  
tion of anguish will, at the same hour, seize  
on the deceitful heart? Of His judgement  
who knoweth what is in man, not only the  
actions and the words of His creatures will  
be subjects, but even their motives; or to  
speak more correctly, these more especially  
than

than the former, since, by them alone, the SERM.  
desert of the other can be tried. It can <sup>VIII.</sup>  
scarcely have escaped your observation, that  
by the image of our being judged out of  
those things which are written in the books,  
is expressed the accuracy with which will  
be brought to light every circumstance that  
is necessary to justify, before men and angels,  
the sentence to be pronounced on the con-  
demned: and in those respecting their mo-  
tives is particularly contained the guilt of  
hypocrites. Since their crime consists spe-  
cifically in pretending other motives for  
their behaviour than those from which they  
really act. To how many various species  
of these criminals the anguish of detection  
will then reach, it would be difficult to say:  
for though we most frequently use hypo-  
cisy for a false shew of religious principle,  
yet it seems by no mean proper to confine  
it to that; since the enemies of all religion  
(an host that now appears to encrease daily)  
assume a love of truth, and desire to free  
men from the bondage of superstition, as  
the motives of their conduct. What then  
will

SERM. will be the astonishment of their admirers !  
VIII. What their own confusion ! When it shall appear that in reality pride or vanity ruled their hearts, and directed their operations ; or that the very righteousness of the law which they opposed, by forbidding the gratification of their passions, made them so adverse to it ! How severe must be the mortification of having all the admiration, for which men have in this life been wading through the depths of hypocrisy, suddenly annihilated by its being manifested, that not the motives for which they received so much praise, but others widely different swayed their minds !

Here let the guilty of every kind of insincerity reflect on the disgrace they are preparing for themselves ; let not the tribute of applause they now receive for their assumed characters, blind them to their own destruction : let not vain glory cause you to prefer the present praise of man to the approbation of Him who seeth not as man seeth. For how miserable will be the state  
of

of those, who having here ostentatiously SERM.  
displayed their good works, shall then have nothing new to balance all the concealed faults then first disclosed! But far more wretched than of all who, under a fair semblance, have passed through life prosecuting the views of self-interest alone. By discoveries like these will many that are now first then be last, and numbers who before they fell asleep were honoured, will awake to everlasting contempt.

VIII.

Guilt does, in this world, not only experience great forbearance, but through the prevailing number of culprits, receives no small countenance; but when at the restitution of all things on the side of virtue, there shall appear not only all the righteous sons of Adam, but superior beings innumerable, headed by Him to Whom all iniquity is abomination. With what sensations will sinners then endure that publication of their vileness, which shall finally stamp their characters in the presence of those who will view them with the most unequivocal

SER.M. unequivocal disgust? Recollect, therefore,  
viii. that how easy foever we may now find it  
~~~~~ to impose on others, by doing this in any  
manner, we shall only deceive ourselues
more miserably; because a little while, and
the frauds practised on them shall be set
right; but the effects of these mistakes of
our own must be everlasting; for behold,
on conviction, fentence is to follow!

The sufferings of mind produced by great
disappointment and other severe misfor-
tunes, are such as no man would be willing
needlesly to undergo; but compare the
greatest misery these can occasion here with
the regret, the anguish, and the despair,
which must arise on hearing our heavenly
Judge decide against us, and the former
will appear as nothing. Then will many
who now think present enjoyment, or
worldly profit, only worth their attention,
begin to bewail the folly of their choice,
to lament the opportunities they have miss'd,
the happiness they have lost, “ We have
erred (they will then say) from the way of
truth;

truth ; we have wearied ourselves in the SERM.
way of wickedness and destruction. What ^{VIII.}
hath pride profited us ? Or what good have
riches with our vaunting brought us ? All
those things are passed away like a shadow ! ”
When they behold multitudes, which no
man can number, come from the east, and
from the west, and from the north, and
from the south, and sit down with Abra-
ham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets,
in the kingdom of God, and see themselves
thrust out ; think, timely and effectually
think, what will then be the torments of
their hearts. When in the separation which
our blessed Saviour hath told us, He will
then make among all nations, dividing them
as a shepherd divideth his sheep from his
goats, they see those whom they were wont
to despise preferred before them by the un-
erring judgement of our divine Master, when
they find the very maxims they used
to laugh at, the conduct they used to ridi-
cule, crowned with the supreme reward of
His approbation, Will they not, when they
behold the servant of God thus exalted, re-
penting

SERM. viii. penting and groaning for anguish of spirit, was he whom we had sometimes in derision, and a proverb of reproach : we fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honour: now is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints !”

Far be it from me to exhibit a needless scene of horrour to your minds ; but since the day is fast coming on us all, in which we shall necessarily stand in our lot, either on the right or the left hand of the judgement-seat, according to our works, every call to reflection should be used, every topic should be discussed which is likely to prevail on you to prepare to meet your Judge ; and therefore, I now put it to your hearts again, Should not yourselves, think ye, in the case just stated, feel the same distres, and make nearly the same reflections that I have repeated ? Would not the dread of the punishments to which ye were about to be consigned, overwhelm you with tribulation

lation and anguish? Or could the fearful SERM.
doom, the irrevocable sentence, “ Depart ^{VIII.}
from me ye workers of iniquity into ever-
lasting fire prepared for the devil and his
angels,” be received but with weeping and
gnashing of teeth?

I have, indeed, been hitherto able only to consider one part of the judgement described in the text, that which is calculated to excite in you fear, circumspection, and timely effort to avoid being involved in it—the opening of the book of life, in which may God grant we all may find our names written, (and if we do not it will be our own fault) and the joy attending both the hope and the hearing of our sentence out of that, may hereafter be investigated. For the present I must conclude with exhorting you to let the nearness, and the manifest signs of the approach of this great day, when a new arrangement of men and things will determine our lot for ever, make a beneficial impression on your hearts.

SERM. The interval in which any of us may
viii. have it in our power thus to prepare ourselves for judgement, will at most be extended not to many years, while to some but a few remain; and we are all uncertain, whether we may not be called to-morrow, or even to-night; yet come when it will, we know, we must obey the summons. Viewing circumstances in this manner, therefore, to each individual of us our Judge standeth nigh, even at the door. And for the tokens of the coming of that day upon all the inhabitants of the earth, the equity and the mercy of God have provided, ever since He declared His purpose to judge the world, that no generation of Christians should pass without sufficient warning to expect it, the cares and the pleasures of this life may make us inattentive to them, and we may think, that had we lived in earlier ages we should have been so stricken with the signs and wonders then wrought, as to have had our souls alive to the hope of our Lord's return. But as our predecessors in the middle ages were, by having no gain-sayers

fayers to disturb their faith, placed on a SERM.
level with those who went before them, ^{VIII.}
but whose confidence, in the midst of oppo-
nents, was supported by recent miracles ;
so we, by the accumulating testimony of
prophecies now rapidly accomplishing in
the world, have a light shining on us, suf-
ficient to guide us through all the difficul-
ties, which the prevailing apostacy of the
times throws in our way. We have only
to be sincere and earnest in making due use
of it, then far from our divine Master's
coming in a day that we think not of, and giving
us an hour that we are not aware, and giving
us a portion with the unbelievers, He will
find us watching, and verily we shall be
numbered among those blessed servants unto
whom He will give a crown of life !

SERMON IX.

ON THE LAST JUDGEMENT.

REV. XX. 12.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

HAVING already endeavoured, in two SERM.
discourses on these words, to impress IX.
on your minds an effectual sense of the tri-
bulation, anguish and despair, which the
circumstances of judgement thus depicted
by the evangelist, may naturally be expected
to raise in the souls of all, who shall have
M 3 neglected

SERMON.
^{IX.} neglected to lay hold on mercy during the day of salvation ; it now remains to call your attention to the more pleasing scene, which an innumerable company even of such as were sometime sinners, but have been washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, will as necessarily exhibit through the rapturous feelings of their hearts at the glorious appearance of Him, in Whom, though they have not seen Him, they yet have believed.

Reflection suggests, and revelation confirms the suggestion, that judgement will overtake us as death found us ; I mean that during the intermediate state, neither our characters, nor the nature of our expectations, will undergo any change : for as on the one hand, “ Repentance in the grave there is none ;” so on the other, “ Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord !” The contrast, therefore, which appears between the sinner and the righteous in their last moments in this state, will be continued in
the

the next ; and by considering the sensations SERM.
of the latter, as directly contrary to those IX.
of the former, we shall, perhaps, arrive
more nearly than by any other way, at a
just idea of the joy and exultation which
they, who love His appearance, will feel,
when they shall awake up after the likeness
of Him, who hath redeemed them out of
every kindred, and tongue, and people, and
nation.

As astonishment, confusion, and terrour,
seem the effects to be expected in the breasts
of the infidel and the blasphemer, on find-
ing themselves actually before the throne
of their heavenly Judge, so joy, compla-
cency, and the most delightful anticipation
of permanent security, and encreasing hap-
piness, will naturally arise in the heart of
every faithful servant on the sight of his
divine Master. To say, that human lan-
guage cannot express the triumphs of that
day, is saying but little indeed, since there
is no reflecting mind which will not, on
experiment, find all its powers of imagina-

SERM. tion totally unable to form any satisfactory
IX. idea of the exultation which must be the
~~~~ portion of those who have believed, when  
He who is now gone to prepare a place for  
them shall, according to His promise, come  
again in glory, “ to take them unto Him-  
self, that where He is there they may be  
also.”

Ye know how much the heart may be elated with imaginary honour, and the false glories of this world ; ye are conscious how grateful to the human mind is a victory in any contest, and what self-gratulation arises even from being able to convince an opponent in debate, that the proposition we maintained is right. What then must be the justly-founded raptures of those, who having fought the good fight in this life, and contended for the truth, shall see the palm given to their arguments, and their confidence established, by the fitting of that tribunal, the expectation of which they boldly confessed, and to whose decisions they were wont resolutely to appeal ? in lieu of

the shrieks of dismay then uttered by the SERM.  
enemies of the Gospel, Will not the victo- IX.  
rious soldiers of Christ, at this sight, be  
ready, in triumphant accents, to exclaim,  
“ Lo, this is our God, we have waited for  
Him, and He will save us: this is the  
Lord, we have waited for Him, we will  
be glad, and rejoice in His salvation.”

In proportion to the sufferings they passed through for His sake, must be their joy at beholding their Deliverer—the weight of contumely which has been thrown on them, the bitterness of the mortifications they have endured, the severity of the provocations they have withstood, will, according to their measure, all contribute to the encrease of their blifs, on finding that the hour of their redemption is arrived. Then will be understood the saying that is written, “ Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake! And blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely for my sake!” Then will ye who

SERM. who have been sincere in your obedience to  
ix. the doctrine of Christ, begin to experience  
the extensiveness of those blessings which  
He promised to such as would listen to His  
words. How the poor in spirit, the mourners,  
and the meek, can properly be pro-  
nounced blessed, will then no longer need  
explanation ; their extasies at the visible  
presence of Him whose example they en-  
deavoured to follow through sufferings, will  
prove that their past afflictions were but the  
seeds of joy. For if the mere ceasing of  
oppression, be a relief often earnestly wished  
for ; if death be desired as a refuge from  
the cruelty of men, and the evils of the  
world, What will be your rejoicing who  
now suffer for others, or mourn within  
yourselves, when ye behold Him seated on  
the throne of power, to whose protection  
ye have so often commended yourselves,  
whose promise ye have, that He will wipe  
away your tears ?

Cause enough for the righteous soul to  
grieve has the world ever yielded, from the  
shedding

shedding of the blood of Abel to the death SERM.  
of the latest, who have perished in innocence, or the cause of truth; but if ever there were days that more peculiarly excited the feelings of the pious; if ever there were a time in which the enormity of transgressions caused those who hunger, and thirst after righteousness, those who are merciful, and those who are pure in heart, to sigh and look upward, our own are such: from the disgust, then, which ye conceive at the attempts made in these days to eradicate from among men every principle, and every symptom of piety; from the horrors with which ye are stricken at the nefarious mockeries of justice, at the promiscuous and extensive slaughters that have now been perpetrated; from the anguish of spirit with which ye hear the details of the blasphemies, the cruelties, and the impurities in which those who have renounced God and His Christ now glory; Estimate the relief ye will hereafter experience, the joy which will spring in your hearts, the delight which will pervade your breasts,

SERM. breasts, when ye behold (in the language  
ix. of the prophet) the Sun of righteousness  
arise with healing in His wings, and ordering  
to be gathered out of His kingdom all  
things which offend, and them which do  
iniquity, establish that everlasting dominion  
of His own, which shall never pass away.  
Neither will ye whose souls are now grieved  
at dissensions which ye cannot heal; at  
quarrels and strife, the bitterness of which  
ye cannot assuage, feel less relief, when ye  
perceive an end at once put to the wide  
extended miseries that spring from these,  
by the appearance of that Prince of peace,  
of the encrease of whose government there  
shall be no end.

And thus behold the first part of your  
future happiness necessarily taking its de-  
gree from what ye in this life suffer through  
your virtues! Go now, and complain of  
the hard service of religion; murmur at  
the self-denial which the Gospel prescribes;  
it forbids, ye may say, the gratification of  
even natural appetites; it prescribes a so-  
briety

briety of conduct most irksome to the lovers SERM.  
of pleasure, most intolerable to the votaries IX.  
of fashion ; harshly contradictory to the  
maxims of the world, it treats as of no  
worth qualities highly esteemed among  
men, and insists on practices which invite  
insult, and a temper that provokes imposi-  
tion : but remember, that this burthen,  
whatever it be, will to those (and to those  
only) who endure it to the end, work a far  
more exceeding weight of glory ! Ye may  
shrink from the trial, if such be your  
choice, but verily those alone who finish  
the course can be crowned !

When enquiring into the probable sensations of the wicked at the awful season we are considering, it appeared, that the more particular we made our investigation, the greater seemed the threatened horrors that await them. The contrast between the impenitent and the righteous will even, in this circumstance, hold good ; for carry on your thoughts to the next particular of the text, that of the persons who will be assembled before

SERM. before the judgement-seat of Christ, and  
~~~~~ IX. conceive, if ye can, the joy it must give  
you at this most important, and last needful
day, to find a sufficient number around you
who would testify, that when hungry, ye
fed ; when thirsty, ye gave drink to ; when
naked, ye cloathed ; when strangers, ye re-
ceived ; when sick and in prison, ye visited
those, of whom, your Judge has declared,
that He will consider such good offices done
to them, as performed towards Himself !
Those undescribed sensations which ye feel
on performing acts of benevolence, are,
doubtlessly, attached by our ever-blessed
Creatour to such practices, that they may
serve us as incitements to make unto us
friends by the Mammon of unrighteousness,
that they may receive us into everlasting
habitations ; and the happiness with which
the consciousness of such good works fill
your hearts at present, ye may well consider
as a foretaste, however flight, of the abun-
dant felicity awaiting you, when He, whose
commandment to love your brethren, ye
have obeyed, appearing to take account of
His

His servants, ye see yourselves surrounded SERM.
by such as will bear you witness, that ye have not been barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. IX.

Listen to the strains in which the great apostle of the Gentiles anticipates the happiness he expected to derive from some, to whom he had been made the minister of good. “ For what (faith he) is our hope, our joy, our crown of rejoicing ? Are not ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming ? For ye are our glory and joy ! ” So to all who have been willing instruments of the divine mercy, in ministering to the natural or moral wants of men, whether by relieving the poor, instructing the ignorant, or reclaiming the transgressors, shall the appearance of those to whom they are conscious of having thus performed the task their Lord hath enjoined them, yield joy and glory, when their eyes meeting the grateful looks of those who, by their well-timed bounty, were preserved from giving way to temptations to dishonesty that

SERM. that then pressed sore upon them, or by
IX. their lessons were delivered from the deceit-
fulness of error, and all the dreadful con-
sequences of impious maxims, or by their
friendly warnings and earnest admonitions,
converted from sin unto righteousness, shall,
from the humble confidence of their coun-
tenances, inform them of the blessed effects
of their charitable exertions. What exulta-
tion, what a crown of rejoicing, will they
not then find in works, which, though here
perhaps little noticed, have followed them
to the throne of judgement ! And if such
kindness to whom ever exercised, shall then
whisper peace and joy to your souls, where
it has produced its intended effects on those
to whom we are more nearly related in the
flesh, Will not the knowledge of them raise
sensations directly opposite to the anguish
and the horrour which await the negligent
parent, and the faithless guardian ? Will
not ye who have taught your children and
your households to keep the way of the
Lord, and to do justice and judgement,
who have endeavoured to infuse into their
hearts

hearts not the love of the world, but the SERM.
love of God, and directed their attention IX.
beyond those which are seen, to the things
which are not seen, in that hour rejoice
with joy unspeakable, and full of glory,
over those whom ye yourselves directed to
the path of life?

Rapturous, indeed, will be the feelings
springing from this source, yet must they
receive encrease from the next succeeding
circumstance in this great process, the open-
ing of the books; by which the characters
of the righteous will be cleared not only
from the reflections of the invidious, and
the misrepresentations of the malicious, but
from the degrading, though groundless im-
putations, of the ignorant and the foolish,
who, under the proud affectation of pity,
often censure conduct, of which the mo-
tives are sufficiently exalted, to be far above
out of their sight.

The victories of the righteous are chiefly
gained over himself, and, consequently,

SERM. ix. make neither noise or appearance in the world, though the measures necessary to them may often require a conduct, to which the dissolute or the thoughtless will readily apply the opprobrious terms of unsocial, niggardly, and spiritless. But be of good courage, ye who seek not the praise of men ; the less known to the world your present labours are, the greater shall be your glory before the throne of Him in whose sight ye wish to stand approved ; your heavenly Father Who seeth in secret, will reward you openly : and “ when the book of life is opened, with great boldness will ye stand before the face of such as afflicted you, and made no account of your labours ! ” Often, in the anguish of your souls, have ye appealed to the judgement of your God, for the innocence of your conduct, for the rectitude of your intentions ; often complained of the cruelty of the suspicions entertained, and of the flanders uttered against you ; how your words have been misinterpreted, your deeds misrepresented, and your good evil spoken of ; but behold the hour cometh,

cometh, when for all your griefs, ye shall ^{SERM.} receive more than double, at the hand of ^{IX.} ~~~~~ Him who judgeth rightly ! Think, what will then be your joy, when you receive the authoritative assurance, that the end ye sought in all labours is secure ! What your ecstasy on hearing your names announced among those that are written in Heaven ! We know from numerous examples, that tidings of great joy can excite sensations so exquisitely great, as in our present frame cannot even be supported ; What then shall we think of the feelings of those who, without fainting under it, will experience a happiness to which the highest this state can yield, will bear no comparison !

And yet great, inconceivably great, as this must be, judge ye, whether it will not be augmented by hearing any whom we have loved in this state, called to the same happy lot. Neither entertain in your hearts any misgivings that the enjoyments of the righteous from the last circumstance, will be at all counterbalanced by their sorrow

SERM. for those whom, having here regarded, they
ix. shall perceive are consigned to a different
~~~~ doom. The pious, indeed, are not used to  
be intimately connected with those whom  
they know to be ungodly, the number of  
such cases will, therefore, be by this mean  
reduced; and where they have unwittingly  
contracted a personal affection for them, the  
vileness then manifested in the condemned,  
will in the spirits of just men made per-  
fect, raise an abhorrence of their characters,  
which will at once extinguish all affection,  
and make them acquiesce, without reluc-  
tance, in the justice of their sentence.

Should it farther suggest itself to you,  
that in a disclosure of conduct so general,  
even of the best men many things must be  
revealed of which they will then be  
ashamed, and hence your hopes of unmixed  
happiness be lessened. Attend to the parti-  
cular language of the text; “ And another  
book was opened, which is the book of  
life.” As if it had been said, the secret  
deeds of the wicked, indeed, shall be brought  
to

SERM.  
IX.

to light, to prove the justice of their con- demnation, but the naming of the good, as the chosen of God, will be a sufficient testimony of their worth, while their transgressions of which they have truly repented, shall not be called to remembrance, according to the word of the Lord by the prophet Ezekiel, “ If the wicked turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right ; if the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he hath robbed, walking in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him.” Unabashed, therefore, by the repetition of transgressions already blotted out, having washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb ; with enlightened minds and rectified attachments will they be prepared to taste, with unmixed enjoyment, the felicity which will arise from seeing in the separation that the great Shepherd of the flock shall then make, those whose souls were in this life most congenial with their own, placed with

SERM. themselves on the right hand ; and from  
IX. anticipating the bliss of the endless ages of  
promised happiness, on which they are now  
about to enter in the company of those  
with whom they once parted in all the bit-  
terness of grief, but from whom they shall  
henceforth never be separated. Raise then,  
as nearly as ye can, your hearts to an idea  
of this situation, when ye shall stand, ex-  
pecting from the mouth of Him who died  
that ye might live, but who liveth for ever  
and ever, these words, decisive of everlast-  
ing felicity, “ Come, ye blessed children  
of my Father, receive the kingdom pre-  
pared for you from the beginning of the  
world.” And consider, whether the hope  
of partaking in this lot, at the end of our  
days, be to be relinquished for the sake of  
any enjoyments we can now have, or  
through fear of any exertions that may be  
now necessary—the heart of man, indeed,  
cannot conceive the good things which God  
hath prepared them that love him ; but  
consider only the happiness which in this  
world is provided for the human race, if

fin

sin had not come in and interrupted the en- SERM.  
joyment of it; reflect with how great fin- IX.  
cerity yourselves and others have exclaimed,  
How happy could we be but for such and  
such circumstances, all of which arise from  
sin in itself, or its consequences; and ye  
will then so apprehend the peace and joys  
of that state, in which there shall be no  
more curse, no more death, neither sorrow,  
nor crying, nor any more pain, as may  
excite you to set your affections on things  
above, to run so that ye may obtain, and  
now, *indeed* putting away every thing un-  
worthy a candidate for Heaven, gain for  
yourselves, though an humble, yet a most  
joyful confidence, that when the judgement  
shall sit, and the books be opened, ye shall  
receive the command to take possession of  
the inheritance of the sons of God, and to  
enter into life!



# SERMON X.

ON THE FUTURE STATE OF HAPPINESS.

---

REV. XXI. I.

*And I saw a new heaven and a new earth.*

**V**ARIOUS particulars of that glorious SERM.  
inheritance, to which all Christians x.  
are taught to look as the sure reward of  
their faith and obedience, are mentioned in  
other parts of the sacred writings ; but in  
the two concluding chapters of the Revela-  
tion vouchsafed to the beloved disciple, and  
through him given to the church, they are  
all placed in one point of view ; and the  
recovery of fallen man from transgression,  
from the curse and death, and his restora-  
tion to those blessings, which were forfeited  
by

SERM. by the sin of our first parents, the tree of  
X. life, and the presence of God, are by the spirit of prophecy openly declared. And thus are these Holy Scriptures, though consisting of so many different portions, written by various persons, in ages and places widely distant, closed in a manner accurately corresponding with their beginning: and the account they give us of God's dealings with the human race, is rendered complete, by being carried on to that time when, through the omnipotence of their Creatour's mercy, they shall be restored to the secure possession of that state of happiness, in which He had placed them, when they were first called into being.

Few persons, I conceive, read with attention the second chapter of Genesis, without regretting the loss of that paradise, which the Lord had planted; or without (on comparing the happy life which the descendants of Adam might there have passed, with their present situation, in the midst of frailty, pain, and sorrow) being,  
led

led to wish for that restoration of all SERM. things, with an intimation of which the Lord God was pleased to alleviate the sentence He pronounced on His disobedient creatures. Now the gratification of such a wish, in its fullest extent, is displayed to us in the vision of the text; and which I have chosen for subject of discourse, because the particulars therein revealed are calculated, not only to excite in our minds the most earnest desires to be admitted to a state so full of glory and happiness, but to convince us also of the indispensable necessity of those preparations, which the Gospel, in almost every page, warns us to make against the appearance of that kingdom. May I not therefore hope, that the attention to this subject will be as general as the interest we have in it, and earnest in proportion to the loss with which deficiency on our part would be attended?

Now, although the representation which this vision contains of the glories of the heavenly Jerusalem, (called heavenly, because

SERM. cause it comes down from Heaven) be  
x. evident, for the most part emblematical,  
~~~~~ though they be described under the images  
of those things which at present convey to
our minds the highest ideas of pure mag-
nificence, and unclouded splendour; yet
several of the blessings to be inherited on
the new earth are literally expressed, while
even those that are conveyed in figure, are
not so darkly shaded, but that we may form
notions of them sufficiently clear and strong,
to raise in our breasts most anxious desires
to be thought worthy of admission to them.
If they are not designed to be contemplated
by us, What reason can be given for their
having been revealed? Since these cannot,
like other parts of the line of prophecy,
be of service, when they are fulfilled, as
testimonies of the truth of revelation; be-
cause when the day of judgement is once
arrived, no further demonstration will be
wanting. The end, therefore, of such de-
lineations of particulars of the future state,
must be to arrest our attention, and to ren-
der us desirous of partaking of the good
things

things thus set before us in similitudes. SERM.
And if so, surely it is not dealing fairly by ourselves, not to make use of the means thus afforded us of engaging our affections on the side of our real interest. We know that the preference men give to the things of this life, arises not from any superiority they are even supposed to possess over those of the next, but merely from their being present: to counteract, then, the effects of a circumstance, which experience shews to be so powerful, we may, by the use of reflection, place the future blessings in a light so strong before our minds, as to make the deepest impressions on them; and if we neglect to use the power we thus possess of fixing our inclinations on things eternal, Who but ourselves will in justice be to blame for all the consequences of our thus acting against the dictates of common sense? Under this consideration let us proceed to a brief review of the particulars mentioned in this most awful and interesting part of revelation.

SERM. ^{X.} The first more remarkable circumstance that occurs in the apostle's account of the new earth, is, that on it " there will be no sea." A point well worthy of attention, on account of its perfect consistency with that state of happiness we are taught will be there enjoyed. For of that commercial intercourse which is now carried on by means of the great body of waters, and which conveys the products of one country to supply the wants of another, there can be no need in a state in which the infirmities and the necessities of the present shall be no longer known. Neither will other purposes to which the ocean has here contributed, by keeping nations separate for ages, exist in a world, where the whole dispensation is complete, and not, as in the present, only in progress to something hereafter to be revealed. Severe, and many are the evils caused by the sea ; the prospect it yields, however grand and striking on the first view, is, in fact, a barren prospect, and full of melancholy suggestions. If an ocean be subject to storms, it must occasion afflictions ;

afflictions ; and could we suppose it always SERM.
free from them, it must produce exhalations the most noxious and disgusting. So that in every view taken of it by man, (and, let it be remembered, it is to man that the prospect of happiness in another world is intended to be given in the Gospel) the sea is a part of the globe he lives on, incompatible with the perfect happiness of its inhabitants, and which, consequently, it might justly be expected, would no longer exist where such happiness is to enjoyed : in exact conformity to which expectation, excited by reasoning on the very nature of things, St. John declares, that on the new earth he saw “ there was no sea.”

In the state from which will thus be banished, what is a source of so many and severe sufferings in the present, “ There shall (it was farther revealed to the apostle) be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying ; neither shall there be any more pain.” And thus will the sons of Adam be freed from all the afflictions under which they at present

SERM. present groan ; with this peculiarity in their
x. state of relief, that there will be room to
~~~~~ dread any alteration of it. Here the cer-  
tainty of death, and the uncertainty of its  
season, render even in the youngest the en-  
tertainment of sanguine hopes of any distant  
enjoyment, a subject of reproof, an object  
of ridicule ; but there ye may plan future  
schemes of happiness without danger of  
disappointment, and engage in the longest  
pursuits without hazard of interruption.  
Doubt will then give way to security, and  
hope be changed into possession. The sigh  
of mourning, the lamentation of disappoin-  
tment, the complaint of oppression, and the  
shriek of terrour, will then no more be  
heard ; because “ the former things are  
passed away :” but safety unmencaced, joy  
unalloyed, happiness unmixed, will be to  
those who are deemed worthy of an en-  
trance into that state, because “ the Lord  
God hath made all things new.”

But the particular more circumstantially  
noticed in this portion of the vision, is  
“ the

“ the great city, the Holy Jerusalem,” de- SERM.  
scribed as composed of materials which x.  
plainly allude to those characters of which  
its citizens will consist. The Lord had  
promised, by the prophet Zechariah, to try  
the remnant of Israel as the gold is tried ;  
and thus St. John declares, that the city was  
of pure gold. By the mouth of the pro-  
phet Malachi it was said likewise, that  
those who feared the Lord, and thought  
upon His name, should be His in the day  
when He made up His jewels : to this  
allusion how strongly answers the figurative  
description of the heavenly Jerusalem : the  
building of the wall is of jasper, its foun-  
dations are garnished with all manner of  
precious stones, and the twelve gates are  
twelve pearls. In consistency with other  
scriptures on the foundations, are inscribed  
the names of the twelve apostles ; and as  
entrance into this holy city is accorded only  
to those who are engrafted into the stock of  
Israel, on the twelve gates are the names of  
the twelve tribes of the chosen people.  
While the number of its square measure

SERM. exactly answers to the number of that glorious company, which are declared to be the “ first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb.” In the midst of this community are found the trees of life, and the river of life: and to complete the glory of the scene, the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it; and “ His servants shall see His face.”

Now what a subject for reflection, what an object of earnest desire, is here presented to our minds, in the happiness to be enjoyed in a world from which every natural inconvenience, every moral evil, will be everlastingly banished; and the citizens of whose capital will be specifically the congregation of the very best men that have passed through this life, purified even from the few imperfections they betrayed under the severest trials of the present world; and placed by the unerring sentence of the Judge of all the earth, in their proper station, at the head of human kind! For into this city, it is declared, “ they shall bring the glory

glory and the honour of the nations.” And, SERM. indeed, to dwell round the throne of the Almighty, and be appointed to reside under the immediate glory of His visible presence, is a distinction, which raises a creature to a degree of exaltation, which not the generality of sons of Adam alone, but, perhaps, still superior beings, may look up to, while themselves move only in a lower sphere. But “ Will God, indeed, dwell with men?” and Can an inheritance like this be reserved for such unprofitable servants? These are questions of wonder which, while they naturally arise from reflecting on the immeasurable distance between our heavenly Father and ourselves, lead also to the consideration of the indispensable necessity there is for those preparations which the Gospel so earnestly and so repeatedly warns us to make against the appearance of the kingdom of Heaven. For if the good things which revelation thus declares, God hath prepared for those who love Him, be so excellent, that it is absolutely an exercise of our faith to per-

X.

SERM. suade ourselves of the possibility of the gift;   
~~~~~ x. how much less can we believe, that any share in them will be granted to those, who refuse to comply with the conditions on which they are offered ; or neglect to obtain the qualifications, which are declared requisite in every one, who shall partake of them ? If ye are astonished, that God should in any wise condescend to dwell with men ; ye cannot be surprized that He should require those of them, among whom He will vouchsafe to dwell, to purify themselves as He is pure. The very fact of God's purposing to exalt all the followers of Christ to such glory, accounts at once for the charge given to all who name the name of Christ to depart from evil ; and proves, that by the strictness of the Gospel precepts, it is not merely the exercise of our faith, or the trial of obedience, that is intended ; but the rendering us such characters, as are requisite to fill that high station, to which the goodness of God, through Christ, will promote those among us, who choose to qualify themselves for it.

Hence-

Henceforth then, when ye find yourselves SERM.
inclined to complain of the purity which x.
the Gospel requires in its disciples, take
into the account the holiness of that com-
munity, of which these disciples are ad-
mitted probationary members; and ask your-
selves, whether any characters short of those
which we are required to become, would
be fit to be exalted to a station so dignified,
so glorious, as that declared to be reserved
for the real followers of Christ. When ye
would soothe yourselves under the remem-
brance of your transgressions, and proceed-
ing in all the cant of the reprobate, ye
argue, that surely the divine mercy will
never require this commission, and that
neglect, at the hands of so frail a creature
as man; recollect, that the determinate
connection between righteousness and hap-
piness is already established by the nature
God was pleased to give to things, when
in the beginning He created them. Consis-
tently with which we find our blessed
Lord mentioning the kingdom to be inher-
ited by those of whom He shall approve,

SERM. as prepared for them from the beginning of
x. the world. Proceeding then on these facts ;
that without holiness, no man shall see the
Lord ; and that this holiness is a real
character, to which alone are adjusted the
glories and the enjoyments, the honour and
the happiness of the future state : consider
the absolute necessity of acquiring this hol-
iness, if ye wish to be successful candidates
for a portion among the sons of God. Or
should ye imagine, that a less perfect righte-
ousness might save you from condemnation ;
and provided that point be secured, be con-
tent to give up the highest glory to which
ye are called ; (for to what will not the
meanness of vice submit) recollect, that the
composition ye wish for is not to be made ;
for it is declared, that those very characters
who, on account of the defilement they
have contracted, shall not enter into the
holy city, shall moreover have their part in
the lake which burneth with fire and brim-
stone. And need ye be told the reason of
the condemnation of such characters ? Or
is it not manifest to any one, who will be
at

at the pains of thinking at all seriously on this SERM. most important of all subjects, that as they who have not obtained habits of purity, charity, and piety, would both be uneasy in themselves, if placed in a society so holy, and also offend others by the irregularity of their behaviour, thus interrupting the promised tranquility of that happy state; so men, who have rejected the mercy of God, despised His promises, and thought scorn of that heavenly country, are presumptuous transgressours, the guilt of whose disobedience being estimated by their obligations to attention, is sufficiently great to merit all the punishments with which these scriptures threaten the impenitent?

From this untoward generation, therefore, it is yours to save yourselves. The question which was put to the children of Israel, in the name of the Lord, may with justice be put to the church of the Gentiles likewise; “ What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?” On the first preaching of christi-

SERMON. anity, a doctor of the Jews, celebrated for
x. his learning, his abilities, and his character,
~~~~~ not yet convinced of the truth of the Gospel, stated what he considered as a decisive test of its coming from Heaven. " If this counsel, or this work, be of men, (said he) it will come to nought. But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it." And this test was so far assented to by its most bitter enemies, who had opportunity of examining on the spot the pretensions and the works of its preachers, who were well versed in the doctrines on which it was founded, and in possession of the Scriptures on which it claimed, that they for a season withheld their hands, then stretched out in persecution of its professors, but finding that it stood the test proposed, and that instead of decreasing in its influence, it wonderfully grew and prospered ; they renewed their cruel efforts to extinguish it, but though still more potent enemies joined in the attempt, after a period of upwards of 1700 years, here are we inhabitants of a far distant region of the earth, assembled in

acknowledgement of the divine origin of SERM.  
that Gospel, which (Gamaliel well argued) x.  
would, had it not been of God, have come  
to nought.

In addition too to this constant call made on us to be mindful of the reality of that system of divine government under which we live, from the hour of its being first preached to the present instant, the situation of the professors of the Gospel have been accurately such as was pre-signified by the prophets, the apostles, and the Lord Himself—the sins of christendom have, in fact, been visited, and the corruptions of christianity avenged, until, in the present age, the want of consideration of the judgements of God, and indifference to His approbation or His wrath, being become almost as great and as general as they can be, His afflictions begin to assume an appearance more terrifick than has yet been seen. Instances of nations apostatizing from christianity, instances of their most grossly corrupting its doctrines and perverting its precepts,  
and

SER.M. and of the divine judgements falling on  
X. them for these things, and of their conse-  
quently sinking from a high state of civiliza-  
tion into the lowest barbarism, ye may  
perhaps find recorded in history. But that of  
a very numerous nation, among whom learn-  
ing had long been cultivated, the arts and  
sciences had long flourished, and which  
had, as it were, fascinated all its neigh-  
bours into a servile imitation of its follies  
and vices, formally renouncing the Gospel,  
abolishing, by order of a government in  
which they all affected to participate, the  
observation of the Lord's day, and shutting  
up their churches ; and moreover, delibe-  
rately forming plans for continuing infide-  
lity and vice to succeeding generations  
among themselves, and propagating them  
in surrounding nations, and from the most  
polished, becoming, in an instant, as it  
were, the most savage people on the earth :  
while the inhabitants of the adjoining lands  
(not even excepting our own) appear to be  
much less averse to their principles than  
fearful of their arms, is a novel occurrence  
unparalleled

unparalleled in the annals of mankind, yet SERM.  
forming an actual commencement, and in- x.  
dicating the future growth of such a dark-  
ness as it is written, shall in the last days  
cover the people ; when, instead of making  
the proper use of their sufferings, and re-  
penting of their deeds, they shall only blas-  
pheme the God of Heaven because of their  
pains and their woes : and thus manifest  
to us, that we are not indeed far removed  
from the last link in that chain of events  
which the scriptures have described to us,  
as extending from the time of our blessed  
Saviour's ascension to Heaven, to that of  
His coming again. Is this a time, then, to  
be thoughtless of our salvation, when the  
day, that must bring forth the sentence of  
it, is so plainly near at hand ? Or, is the  
hope of the scene of happiness I have this  
day set before you from the Scriptures, not  
worth cherishing ? For if it be deserving  
of any attention, it must be so of the  
highest.

In

SERM. In the name of God, therefore, of that  
x. God who offers you such inexpressible mer-  
cies, let me beseech you to make a real and  
effectual use of the light of His revelation  
while ye yet have it; it may in wrath, it  
will in judgement, be taken from those who  
refuse to walk by it. That this has before  
been done, ye see in the fate of His ancient  
people the Jews; ye see it in what has be-  
fallen many who once called themselves  
Christians. And should ye, by your wilful  
deafness to this and every call, bring down  
the same sentence on yourselves, What, can  
ye conceive, will be the regret, the hor-  
rour, the anguish of your souls, when  
waking in another life, and seeing the pro-  
mised glories of the sons of God revealed,  
ye are told that your portion lies another  
way! Ponder well this question: and re-  
collecting that the kingdom of Heaven con-  
sisteth not in *words*, any more than in *meat*  
or *drink*, strive to obtain an inheritance  
therein, by both holding fast the faith, and  
practising the works of a Christian; re-  
ferring constantly to the Testament of your  
Lord,

Lord, that ye may know what is truly the SERM.  
work He hath left you to do ; and fre- x.  
quently reviewing His promises, that ye  
may rise superiour to every difficulty, and  
be carried triumphantly through every trial,  
by the blessed hope of being, in the end,  
admitted “ to the city of the living God,  
the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumer-  
able company of angels, to the general  
assembly and church of the first born, which  
are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge  
of all, and to the spirits of just men made  
perfect, and to Jesus the Mediatour of the  
new covenant.” To Whom with Him that  
sitteth upon the throne, be ascribed, as is  
most due, salvation and blessing, and glory,  
and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour,  
and power, and might ; for ever and ever !



# SERMON XI.

ON THE FUTURE PUNISHMENT OF THE  
WICKED.

---

ST. MATT. XXV. 46.

*And these shall go away into everlasting  
Punishment.*

THE particular earnestness with which SERM.  
our blessed Lord warned men of the xi.  
fearful doom awaiting the wicked, accu-  
rately corresponds with the character of  
Him, who came to be, through his own  
sufferings, the Saviour of all, who are  
willing to be saved from such condemna-  
tion. In a discourse recorded in the latter  
part of the ninth chapter of St. Mark's  
Gospel, he repeated no less than three  
several

SER.M. several times the images under which he  
~~~~~ XI. was wont to describe the torments of the  
cursed. But this earnestness does, on the
other hand, as little accord with the imagi-
nation that the menaces of a fire which
never goeth out, and a worm which never
dieth, are, in great part, but empty threats:
a presumptuous and silly conceit, which
some corrupters of the Gospel strongly sup-
port, while others, who unfeignedly loath
any participation in their guilt, take it up
under a mistaken notion of its tending to
manifest the glory of God and of Christ.

Great as are the punishments threatened
to the wicked, it is plain the prospect of
them does not intimidate men from the
practice of sin; and the menaces, conse-
quently, are not greater than are absolutely
requisite to deter men from the breach of the
divine laws. But if human perverseness
be such, as to demand menaces of pun-
ishments so severe, should those menaces be
despised, will justice require any thing less
than the absolute infliction of the penalty
threat-

threatened? In support of the negative of SERM. this question it has been argued, that the xi. sanctions of the divine law, it must be presumed, will be perfect; but as that to which any thing can be added is not so, it necessarily follows, that the penalties on the breach of that law must be everlasting.

In reply to all these reasonings, not only the mercy of God is pleaded, but it is even pretended, that such retribution would be matter of injustice; and thus is the dread of future punishment lessened, and sanctions, which already prove in many cases of no avail, reduced to be ineffectual in still more. To prevent ourselves from being misled, nay, cheated of our salvation, by the shallow but presumptuous blessings of either those who wilfully oppose the truth, or others who are deceived by the plausible cloak of tenderness for the infirmities, and pity for the sufferings of men; let us now examine the arguments of those who would persuade us that the punishment of sinners will not be everlasting; and then proceed

SERM. to consider the miseries of that lot, which
xi. reason suggests, and scripture declares, will
be their portion in another state.

The first topick from which these reasoners argue, is the divine mercy, with which they say, it is inconsistent to have created beings who would make themselves everlastinglly miserable. But surely, when contemplating the perfections of our Creatour, we are bound to enquire with caution, and pronounce with humility. Whatever may be our future lot, that it was not inconsistent with His goodness to make us subject unto it, is manifest from our existence itself; and how far His mercy will extend to affect that lot, He certainly must best know. If we have, then, a revelation of His will concerning it, the words of that must be decisive; and it is absurd to look out for any other ground on which to form our expectations concerning it. Since if we discover something that may encourage us to draw a conclusion different from what is revealed, and lead us to imagine
that

that we thereby exalt the mercy of our SERM.
God; we shall still be doing this at the expence of His truth. If God hath declared in His Gospel, that the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, all our speculations on His mercy will prove nothing but our dread of such a doom, as long as His truth must stand unimpeached.

xi.

In the same manner may be answered the arguments which the same reasoners draw from the perfection of the satisfaction made by the sufferings of Christ. That will, doubtlessly, reach to all for whom He will intercede: and therefore, in part perhaps, is all judgement committed unto Him; that He may exercise the most uncontroled power of salvation. Still hath He declared by His apostle, that He gave Himself for us, that He might purify unto Himself a peculiar people: still has He taught in His own person, that strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it; and still has He commanded His disciples to go, and

SERM. preach to all nations, that he that believes,
xi. and is baptized, shall be saved ; and he that
~~~~~ believeth not, shall be damned. And still  
has He affirmed, that He will, in the last  
day, say unto those on His left hand,  
“ Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting  
fire, prepared for the devil and his  
angels.”

To avoid the force of this last text, and others of like meaning, we are sometimes boldly assured, that the word rendered everlasting, should not be so understood. Yet is the same term used to express the never-failing existence of God Himself, as in the sixteenth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, “ according to the commandment of the everlasting God.” And this very evasion seems to be guarded against in the Scriptures, not only by the circumlocutions employed on this head, when the place of torment is described, as that where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched : but by its having been specifically declared, that the bodies of the dead  
shall

shall be raised incorruptible ; and each of SERM.  
the future states shall be unchangeable. In xi.  
the former of these points, we are instructed  
by St. Paul, in the fifteenth chapter of his  
first epistle to the Corinthians ; and the last  
our Lord hath taught us in the parable of  
the rich man and Lazarus. Now surely,  
if the subjects of punishment be to exist for  
ever, and yet, when once placed in the tor-  
ments to which they are condemned, never  
change their state, it must be something  
more than folly to deny, that their punish-  
ment shall be everlasting.

But by others it is affirmed, that such a  
dispensation would be unjust, and therefore  
we must be mistaken in our deductions  
from Scripture ; and that, because there is  
no proportion between temporal offences  
and eternal punishment. Now this obser-  
vation would be just, if the guilt of an  
offence were always in proportion to the  
time employed in the commission of it ;  
but far from this, a trifling imposition may  
require many days for the accomplishment

SERM. of it; while the horrid crime of murder  
xi. may be committed in a moment. Duely  
to estimate the criminality of a transgres-  
sion, the obligation we are under to obey  
the law transgressed, must be taken into  
consideration: and our obligations to com-  
ply with the divine commandments are in-  
finite; the guilt contracted by the breach  
of them must therefore be the same; and,  
consequently, if justice require (as these  
reasoners themselves contend it does) that  
the punishment be in proportion to the  
crime, the punishment attached to trans-  
gressions against God must be infinite.  
Neither should it be suffered to pass un-  
observed, that the sins of the impenitent  
do, in fact, continue as long as they are  
capable of transgressing; and would (since  
we may be certain the divine mercy denies  
to no man, who would make use of it,  
opportunity for repentance) proceed infi-  
nitely, were they not stopped by the inter-  
vention of death. So that although their  
actual crimes may be numbered, the wick-  
edness of their hearts seems past all estimate:

and that the punishment of such souls SERM.  
should be the same, cannot be matter of in- xi,  
justice. 

To return then to the declarations of scripture as unaffected by exceptions so vain ; the duration of the punishment of sinners is expressed in the very same terms as that of the happiness of the righteous : and the variation of phrase introduced by our translators in the last verse of the chapter of the text, “ and these shall go into everlasting punishment : but the righteous into life eternal,” is totally unwarranted by the original. If the sufferings of the former, therefore, are to be but temporary, neither are the joys of the latter ; and thus is the glory of the Christian dispensation eclipsed, the endless ages of happiness procured, by the blood of Christ, for those whom He hath redeemed out of every kindred and tongue, and people and nation, reduced to a limited period of enjoyment, by the fantastical speculations of vain men ; who, though they may not see this consequence

SERM. of the tenet they have embraced, could, xi. one should think, if they first investigated it as they ought to do, scarcely fail of perceiving, that by asserting a temporary punishment for sinners, they are introducing again one of the mischievous errors of the church of Rome, the long-exploded doctrine of purgatory.

Having thus cleared our way through the difficulties started against the doctrine of the text, by the fears rather than the reason of men, it remains to consider the miseries which, in another state, await those who will not use the opportunity for repentance which this affords.

That which is so commonly said of the terrors which great sinners sometimes manifest on their death-beds, that they already suffer the torments of the damned, may well suggest to us the first portion of those miseries, into which the impenitent must hereafter sink. For as their last sufferings here proceed from dread of the

punish-

punishment justly due to their crimes, and SERM.  
from remorse at having wasted their time XI.  
and their faculties on things which profit  
not, we may most reasonably conclude, that  
the same fears, and the same self-reproach,  
will keep possession of their souls when  
separate from their bodies. And when  
these are increased by the reflection, that  
the day of salvation is entirely past, and  
when no external objects remain to divert  
the thoughts, or relieve the attention, even  
for a moment, from the tremendous pro-  
spect, their sufferings, even during this  
period of them, will be such, as to make  
them think, whatever they have gained in  
this world by their transgressions, much too  
dearly purchased.

But when the hour of sentence arrives,  
what was before only the effect of fear,  
must be advanced into the result of cer-  
tainty ; and the being marked by the de-  
cree of that Judge who cannot err, with  
the character of one fit to consort only with  
the devil and his angels, will naturally oc-  
casional

SERM. casion a degree of mortification, give rise  
xi. to such an height of terrour, as no words  
~~~~~ can express, no imagination at present reach.  
Neither will this mortification be transient,
or these terrors vain, since the former will
be rendered permanent, and the latter re-
alized, by an everlasting separation from the
congregation of the righteous, and per-
petual banishment from the presence of God.
And now, for the purpose of exciting your-
selves to every possible exertion for avoiding
such a doom, conceive, as far as ye can,
what would be the feelings of your souls
under it. Having, from the sentence of
approbation with which they were honoured
in your presence, caught a glimpse of the
glory which the righteous inherit, What
would be your regret on reflecting, that
you had presumptuously despised the offer,
madly neglected the opportunity of obtain-
ing the same! In alleviation of the mor-
tification of disappointment, and the pains
of grief, we here often successfully recur
to scenes of festivity, or the conversation of
those who are at ease; and great is the re-
lief

Iief we thus obtain. But when all around us are as wretched as ourselvēs, and the whole region to which we are banished, resounds with the cries of lamentation, and the groans of despair, no intermission of sorrow, no cessation of misery, will be within our reach. The methods which we here have taken to stifle the rebukes of conscience, and render ourselves insensible to the voice of truth, will then appear the most cruel deceptions; and our sufferings, instead of being diminished by communication with those who could pity and relieve, must be rather encreased by being imparted to the wicked in despair: while the hour of repentance, which here rather foorthes the soul of the sinner who is brought to a sence of his offences, being past, for contrition, obduracy alone remains; and that love of God, which in its perfection casteth out fear, being entirely extinguished, to it must succeed unchangeable hatred, accompanied with the most tormenting terrors.

XI.

But

SERM. But in reflecting only that we could draw
~~~~~ XI. no consolation from the company in which  
we should then be placed, we have by no  
means considered all the evils we should  
suffer from them.   Would the malice of  
the wicked, think ye, be lessened, by their  
being rendered desperate?   Will the mocke-  
ries of the cruel, the taunts of the info-  
lent, the spite of the revengeful, be re-  
strained by knowing that their final doom  
is past?   Or rather, Will not all who are  
condemned to depart from the throne as  
cursed, become objects of mutual persecu-  
tion to each other, and hell thus be made,  
even were no external torments added, a  
scene of ceaseless distress, of inexpressible  
misery?

If men could but be persuaded to apply  
their thoughts seriously to what must, in  
the natural course of things, be the suffer-  
ings of the impenitent in another world,  
where, even for the sake of the good, they  
will be entirely separated from them, and  
where it would be absurd to suppose, they  
will

will be placed in a place purposely prepared to afford ease to their restless spirits, SERM. they could not but descry such a portion of misery awaiting obstinate transgressours, in merely being exposed and confined without relief to the company of the damned, as must make an impression on their minds, and convince them, that without adverting to the positive penalties denounced by revelation, the future sufferings of those who continue in iniquity, will infinitely surpass all the pleasure they can here gain through the indulgences of sin.

xi.

But how then will stand the accompt, when the positive punishments with which the Gospel menaces the impenitent, be taken into it? These are, the fire which never goeth out, and the worm which never dieth; and the effects of these on the sufferers are described by weeping, and gnashing of teeth: expressions which convey to us images of the severest torments both of body and mind. While those who conceive, they gain an argument against  
the

SERM. the probability of these, from the presumed  
xi. impossibility of a material fire, seem to for-  
~ get, that the wicked, as well as the righteous,  
shall rise again, with their bodies, to  
judgement. And after all, however men  
may amuse themselves with reasoning on  
the particulars of the future punishment,  
the power of God will infallibly furnish  
means to fulfil all that His justice has  
threatened. As in contemplating, there-  
fore, the everlasting happiness of the good,  
there appeared no danger of our conceiving  
too highly of the blessings they will enjoy,  
so may we be assured, that the fears of the  
sinner, which prove ineffectual to produce  
repentance, will never surpass those real  
sufferings, which he is heaping up for  
himself against the day of the revelation of  
the righteous judgement of God.

We may, then, for the purpose of raising  
in our breasts such an horrour of the penal-  
ties of sin, as may deter us from yielding  
to the temptations of it, without either pre-  
sumption, or peril of encreasing our appre-  
hensions

hensions beyond the reality of the inflic- SERM.  
tions, picture to ourselves a vast abyſs, xi.  
whose utter darkness will be interrupted,  
not relieved, by the blue glare of fulphu-  
rous flames; whose unmeasured concave  
will reſound with ceafeleſs cries of misery;  
cries not of a nature to excite compassion,  
but to raiſe horrore. Wherein, if an hap-  
leſs wretch would remove from place to  
place, in hopes of finding ſome eafe, in-  
ſtead of meeting, as in the regions of the  
blessed, ſmiles of benevolence, and coun-  
tenances of joy, he will encounter only the  
ſcowl of malice, and the grin of deſpair.  
Where, inſtead of the affectionate congra-  
tulations of thoſe with whom he paſt in  
Christian love through this life, he will,  
on meeting his former aſſociates in vice,  
hear only bitter reproaches for the ſhare he  
had in bringing them to that place of tor-  
ment. For ſubjects of meditation he can  
have only the pverfeneſs which brought  
him into that ſcene of misery, and the ſcene  
itſelf; where the lamentations of the ſuf-  
ferers, without alleviating their own, will  
con-

SERM. contribute to encrease each other's wretchedness ; and where, while those who have obtained a contrary lot, receive in the presence of God fulness of joy, they, banished from the light of His countenance, are doomed to dwell with the devil and his angels for ever and ever.

In this course of this address to you, I have repeatedly stated, that the end of calling your attention to these terrors of the Lord, is no other than that of persuading you, if possible, to make timely and effectual exertions for avoiding them. These exertions will necessarily be damped by listening to those vain babblings which would lead you to hope, that they may, in the event, prove less than the Gospel has declared they shall be. The shallowness of such reasonings, therefore, I have endeavoured to expose : and although it be manifest as light itself, that under a wise and just Governour, the disobedient cannot finally be gainers by their transgressions ; yet, as multitudes of the sons of Adam are simple

simple enough to overlook this plain truth SERM.  
in their practice, I have reminded you of the declarations of Scripture as to the greatness of the punishments appointed for the impenitent; that by comparing these with whatever enjoyments, ye may imagine, that ye can in this world gain by sin, ye may see how directly contrary to your own everlasting interest ye act, by refusing the narrow path that leadeth to life, and preferring the broad way that endeth in destruction. As, therefore, ye would wish, when all the good ye can obtain in this world shall be at an end, not to be deprived of all prospect of further happiness, not to be cast into outer darkness, there to abide with the devil and his angels in everlasting burnings, surrounded with the cursed, expressing the torments they endure by ceaseless weeping and gnashing of teeth, wisely make an effectual use of what is revealed of these things, and without waiting until one be sent from the dead to testify of their reality, listen, ere your ears are closed by death, to Moses and the prophets, to the Lord Jesus and His

XI.

SERM. apostles, calling you to repentance ; and  
XI. warning you throughout the sacred volume,  
that there is none other way under Heaven,  
by which men may avoid the plagues, that  
are written in that book.

## SERMON XII.

ON THE TENDENCY AND USE OF TEMPORAL  
AFFLICTIONS.

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PSALM CXIX. 75.

*I know, O Lord, that thy judgements are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*

AS it is the great end of wisdom to teach SERM.  
us the true road to happiness, one XII.  
immediate object of its precepts is to in-  
struct us how we may either lessen, or en-  
tirely extricate ourselves from the evils  
which so often attack men in this life: and  
therefore those in every age who have been  
esteemed teachers of wisdom, have deli-  
vered lessons on this head: how far the

SER.M. Gentile philosophers have succeeded in those  
XII. which they have left us, let any who have  
received benefit from them declare; but to  
tell a man under affliction that there is little  
or no evil in the distress he feels is to con-  
tradiet his senses, while small seems the  
comfort that can be derived from knowing  
that others suffer as much as we do, or  
that our own sufferings might be greater:  
and when the strongest efforts of human  
wisdom produce little better consolations  
than these, intermingled with exhortations  
to bear our miseries like men, because others  
have done so, and because though we can-  
not free ourselves from them, they will  
sometime or other have an end, the need  
we have of some higher instructor, who  
can supply our fainting souls with food  
more solid, becomes too manifest to be  
doubted. But where shall we find such a  
master? The earth, we see, produces none  
such: it is from Heaven alone that we  
must look for a physician of our souls.

It is religion, and religion alone, that SERM. can inform us how to avoid some of the evils that are so prevalent in the world, how to rescue ourselves from others if seized by them, and even, how under those that are inevitable, to be always rejoicing ; and this she can do, by instructing us in the several great truths respecting the providence and attributes of God : for if His providence be universal, if His mercy be over all His works, if nothing unknown to Him can come to pass, and nothing can be done in opposition to His power ; then may we be assured, that He knoweth our sufferings ; and that the permitting us to continue under them, is consistent with His invariable goodness : and we may estimate the evils which have befallen us as His judgements, which are always right ; and be confident, that in very faithfulness He hath caused us to be afflicted. “ But how is this (perhaps ye would now ask) your mode of blunting the stings of affliction, telling us we deserve our sufferings ? Would you heal our infirmities by wounding our spi-

SERMONS? Do you strive to lessen our griefs by  
xii. telling us, the hand of God is upon us? Or, if these things are to be esteemed His judgements, are we to think that all who are in adversity, have brought themselves to it by their sins; and that all the unfortunate are wicked also?" To these questions I will endeavour to reply in their order.

I can then but think, that they reason weakly, and conceive unworthily of the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, who would persuade us, that particular evils are absolutely necessary to the good of the whole, and the sufferings of individuals to the general happiness. Such reasoners appear to me to resemble Job's friends, in presumptuously taking up a cause, with the circumstances of which they are little acquainted, and speaking deceitfully for God. It is true that His providence is perpetually employed in bringing good out of evil, and in remedying those mischiefs which arise from the folly and wickedness of His creatures; But are we therefore to conclude, that

that He originally so formed the world, as SERM.  
to render a partial deformity necessary to  
the beauty of the whole, and make it im-  
possible that some of its inhabitants should  
be happy, but at the expence of others? XII.  
Is his power of communicating happiness  
so limited, that He can dispense a certain  
portion only among His creatures? And are  
the treasures of His goodness so small, that  
if He would enrich one, He must impo-  
verish another? Let us not entertain ima-  
ginations so dishonourable to the great Crea-  
tour of the universe, or ascribe to Him a  
conduct which has so much the appearance  
of injustice, as the condemning of beings  
without any demerits of their own to a  
course of sufferings, merely that they may  
be subservient to the happiness of others.  
Let us rather (however mysterious some of  
the measures of Providence may be, for  
mysterious many of them must be to crea-  
tures short-sighted as we are) rest assured,  
that whatever any one of us undergoes,  
tends materially to our own correction or  
improvement, although it be possible, that

SERM. others may also, at the same time, be  
XII. benefited by it: and let us learn to contem-  
plate the providence of God, in that just,  
though wonderful light, that while it re-  
gulates and governs the universe at large,  
it descends so far to the private concerns of  
the meanest individual, that even the hairs  
of our heads are all numbered; and con-  
sider His wisdom and power to be such,  
that even the variety and complication of  
men's temporal interests can raise no impe-  
diment to His dealing by every one of us  
with the most exact justice, and abundant  
mercy. This will be thinking of the Lord  
our God as we ought to think; it will be  
holding with the well-instructed and truly  
religious in all ages: and if we thus en-  
tertain the same sentiment with them, we  
shall experience the same consolation from  
it which they received. For suppose ye  
that when the psalmist was able to make  
the reflection contained in the text, his an-  
guish was increased by it? No; though  
on the first attack of adversity, when he  
saw the storm gathering on all sides, the

con-

consciousness of his sins augmented his SERM.  
terrors, and made his sorrow still more XII.  
bitter, so as to force him to exclaim, " A  
wounded spirit who can bear!" When he  
grew sufficiently collected in mind to con-  
sider the character of the Judge under whose  
sentence he was suffering, and that his  
heavenly Father ever seasoned justice with  
mercy, the horrors of his soul were calmed,  
he viewed his present ills as probable sources  
of the highest good, and acknowledged the  
kindness of God in thus correcting him,  
by saying, " It is good for me that I have  
been afflicted, that I may learn thy statutes."

And such is the natural and happy con-  
sequence of a just idea and firm belief of  
the universality of the divine providence.  
For evils, with the source of which we are  
unacquainted, affect us the more severely,  
because being at a loss for their origin, we  
are unable, too, to conjecture when they  
will end: but when satisfied that they fall  
to our lot, under the direction of God's  
wisdom and mercy, we have this comfort-

SERMON. able assurance, that they are intended either  
XII. for our correction, in which case they will  
be withdrawn, whenever that is brought  
about, an event that we have it in our own  
power to accelerate, by amending what, on  
an examination of our conduct, we find  
amiss therein, or for our improvement by  
trial, that we may attain an everlasting in-  
heritance among those who are made per-  
fect through sufferings ; and therefore from  
whichever cause they proceed, it is ours to  
search the matter to the bottom, convinced  
that we are neither unreasonably nor un-  
justly subjected to affliction : while by the  
same mode of reasoning we may preserve  
ourselves from putting any uncharitable in-  
terpretations on the cases of others, and  
from conceiving that they are worse than  
other men whose misfortunes are more  
severe ; since “ whom the Lord loveth He  
chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom  
He receiveth.” Neither, I presume, is there  
any good reason to think, that a common  
case, which is related in the Gospel, of the  
man who was born blind, that the glory  
of

of God might be shewed forth on him, SERM.  
by our Lord's imparting sight unto him. XII.  
Indeed, if we fairly consider the circum-  
stances of it, he cannot be said to have suf-  
fered any evil, since, having never experi-  
enced the blessings of light, the want of it  
could but little affect him.

Amply, indeed, doth holy scripture set forth to us, through various passages, that cultivation with which our merciful Creatour favours, and by which, but for our own stubborn and perverse resistance, He would perfect the sons of men. “ Foolish men (saith the psalmist) are plagued for their offence, and because of their wickedness :” and the prophets frequently represent to us, under the image of an husbandman’s management of his vineyard, or his field, God’s dispensations for the correction of that people, whose history hath been preserved for the instruction of all succeeding ages : and our blessed Lord hath likened Himself to a vine, and his disciples to the branches of it, declaring, that every branch which

SERM. which beareth not fruit, His Father will  
XII. take away ; but those which do bear fruit,  
~~~~~ He will purge, that they may bring forth  
more fruit. Hence, then, we may learn to
put a just construction on whatever tem-
poral evils may befall us ; and as on the one
hand, we may be assured, that since God is
not unjust, He will not needlessly subject
us to misery ; so on the other, we should
reflect, that if we want correction, He must
cease to be merciful, before He can fail to
give it us.

Neither is it enormous wickedness only,
or a confirmed habit of vice, that requires
the remedy of punishment ; the application
of the same medicine on our very first trans-
gressions may, in truth, be an act of mercy,
and prevent evil dispositions from taking so
deep root in our breasts as to render a long
course of sufferings necessary to eradicate
them ; nay, further, as a wise physician
would ever prefer a preventive to a remedy,
it may be fit, that even the innocent should
meet with crosses, and such afflictions as
may

may preclude them from opportunities of ^{SERM.} falling into bad habits, and from temptations to sin; against which, though they are not aware of them, their heavenly Father thus mercifully guards them. Dangerous is the security that arises from prosperity; many and rank are the weeds that spring from so rich a soil; ought we then to complain of the hand that keeps our souls from such? or should we not rather bless Him, who thus preserves us from perils, against which, from our ignorance, we cannot even ask for His assistance? “The heart is deceitful above all things,” saith the prophet; and if this be the case, how often may there be lurking in our breasts evil principles, which, though we ourselves be not conscious of it, require the correction of adversity? Even many of those things which, were the judgement of the world asked, it would determine to be but foibles, might prove, if suffered to continue in our breast, impediments to our enjoyment of perfect happiness in whatever state we were.

Ye

SERM. Ye see then to how many causes, in
xii. which we ourselves only are concerned, the
~~~~ afflictions we undergo may be ascribed ;  
and how great reason we have, under all  
our sorrows, to address ourselves to God,  
in confidence that they are His judgements  
which are right, and to confess that in  
faithfulness He hath afflicted us. There  
are several evils which we see attached to  
particular courses of vice as their natural  
punishment ; and that all others are sent  
either for the correction or prevention of  
sins, or the trial and confirmation of virtue,  
there is every ground to believe, since the  
nature and state of man, the attributes of  
God, and the declarations of Scripture, all  
tend to justify this belief. And if such be  
our faith, what should in wisdom be our  
practice ? If we know, that to conquer  
the stubborn heart, it must be bowed down  
by sorrows ; that correction is necessary to  
the rooting out of evil dispositions, and that  
crosses and disappointment are requisite to  
the destruction of vicious habits, we cannot  
be insensible that it is highly absurd to enter

on

on such courses from which we cannot return but through affliction, and our following which calls for punishment as an effect of the very mercy of God. While, on the other hand, the same considerations will tend to preserve us from despondency under sufferings, and to keep alive in us that hope and trust, which are the best incitements to resolute and effectual exertions. If we be convinced, that the ills which overtake us are not the decrees of an irresistible fate, or the effects of blind chance, but those judgements which an all-wise and good God inflicts, and adapts to the circumstances of our case, this lesson will present itself unto us ; that it is ours to forward, as much as in us lies, His gracious purposes, and to hasten, by every mean in our power, that amendment or improvement, towards which His dispensations are thus directed, and at the same time that we shall receive no small satisfaction in the thought, that our Creator is working together with us for our deliverance from error, and our obtainment of salvation, we cannot fail to perceive,

SERM. ceive, that if, pursuing a contrary course,  
xii. we give no heed to the more early warnings  
~~~~ He vouchsafes us, but harden ourselves  
against his chastisements, and will not see
the hand that is stretched out over us, either
our afflictions must be increased until we
do feel, or a sentence of final condemnation
be pronounced against us, as desperate and
incorrigible sinners.

Thus doth our all-perfect Governour and Judge set life and death before us, not only repeatedly calling on us to make, but, if we be going wrong, admonishing us to correct our choice; every rejection of such warning will naturally and justly render our return to the right way more difficult, though we may not be totally deprived of the power of undertaking it until life itself closes: then, indeed, the time of probation being past, when the sinner finds the folly of his choice, and looks back on the opportunities he hath missed, the warnings he hath rejected, and the mercies he hath despised, his shame, remorse, and anguish, must

must be what no powers of language can expres. Imagine a soul freed from the deceptions by which the world blinds us, sensible that all the good it can receive during the whole of its existence, is already past, conscious of the happiness of that state from which its own perverseness alone hath excluded it, and feeling the misery to which, by the just sentence of God, it is for ever condemned; and when ye have considered the bitter agonies such a soul must endure, reflect, that if ye begin not to-day, while it is called to-day, to work out your salvation, these agonies must be your own, since the night cometh, when no man can work.

On the other hand, to encourage us steadily to go through the labour of recovering that ground which we may have lost in the race that is set before us, let us further think on the bliss enjoyed by those who, through the assistance afforded them by their almighty Patron, have come off conquerors in their spiritual warfare; what ecstasy

SER. must such feel, when in the presence of
XII. Him who hath redeemed them out of every
kindred, and tongue, and people, and na-
tion, they reflect on the dangers from which
they have been delivered; and comparing
the miseries they have escaped with the
happiness they now taste, with hearts over-
flowing with gratitude, cast the crowns of
glory which they have received before the
throne, and with ceaseless alleluias ascribe
unto Him who sitteth thereon, and unto
the Lamb, blessing and glory, and wisdom
and thanksgiving, and honour and power.

SERMON XIII.

ON THE SPRING.

PSALM CIV. 14.

*He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle,
and herb for the service of man ; that he
may bring forth food out of the earth.*

THE psalm whence these words are selected, is particularly well known ; its being wholly taken up in the mention of those works of God which are visible to every eye, and the grateful strain which pervades it, for the wonders which He hath wrought, and the bountiful provision He hath prepared for all the creatures which exist on earth, and more especially for man, into whose hands the rest are given, seem

SERM. to have recommended it to general notice.
XIII. *Who, indeed, can be insensible to the justice*
of those praises which the psalmist here
offers to his Creatour? or not partake in
those sensations which he, with such un-
affected earnestness expresses, on contem-
plating the admirable proofs of divine good-
ness, wisdom, and power, which every
part of the world presents unto us? There
is need of neither the acquirements of learning,
nor the endowments of philosophy, to
render our minds susceptible of such im-
pressions from the various testimonies of
the unspeakable glory of the Lord, exhib-
ited to us in the most common operations
of His providence, as will excite us to join
in lauding and magnifying *His* name, of
whose riches the earth is full, and whose
mercy is over all his works. Our advance-
ment in knowledge will constantly supply
us with additional reason, every new disco-
very yield further ground for wonder, love
and praise; and the more extensive our en-
quiries are, the more accurate our researches,
the richer will become the scene of divine

beneficence displayed to our view. Still SERM.
even those who, by their situation in life,^{XIII.}
have been debarred from the more ample
means of instruction, and whose natural
faculties have received no further improve-
ment than what is derived from common
intercourse with the world, cannot be blind
to those splendid proofs of their Maker's
power and munificence that present them-
selves in the manner in which this globe is
fitted for the accommodation of the various
tribes of animals that dwell on it, or deaf
to the calls for gratitude thence arising on
themselves.

The benefits accruing to the inhabitants
of the earth, from the nature and situation
of the heavenly bodies, from the heat of
the sun, and from the light and influence
of the moon, from the clouds raised by the
former to fall again in fruitful and refresh-
ing showers, from the tides occasioned by
the last; the grateful vicissitude of day and
night, by which seasons adapted to our
necessary labours and the rest required,

SERM. alternately succeed each other, the usefulness
XIII. of the numberless rivers with which the
earth is watered, and of the metals and dif-
ferent substances with which its mountains
and its bowels abound ; and various ways
in which all the living things we see there-
on, contribute to each other's support, are
discernible by every eye, and may be com-
prehended by every understanding : while
the blessings which they afford by being
general, demand acknowledgement and
thanksgiving from every individual. In
the attempt, therefore, which I shall now
make to call your minds to the consideration
of that beauteous portion of the wonderful
works of the Lord, which does at this
season of the year begin to shine with pecu-
liar lustre, I trust, I shall meet with univer-
sal attention.

The vegetable world is now coming into
its most florid state : every plant from the
towering oak to the humblest herbs, now
bursts forth in new luxuriance ; and whe-
ther we view them separately or collectively,
they

they afford both by their beauty, and the SERM.
manner in which they administer to the ^{XIII.} support and comfort of our lives, matter
of reflection so obvious, and so capable of
furnishing both pleasure and improvement,
that to be surrounded with them as we are,
and receive as we do, hourly satisfaction
therefrom, yet notice not the sources of it,
would betray a degree of insensibility dis-
graceful to any one who claims the name
of man. Behold the earth clothed with
verdure, and abundantly pouring forth her
various productions ; see the grafs growing
for the cattle, and herb for the service of
man : mark the trees of the forest how
strongly they shoot, and the fruit trees
putting forth their innumerable blossoms ;
how the meads are bedecked with flowers,
and the fields stand thick with corn ! Then
consider this great thing ; that all these
plants differing among themselves in num-
berless degrees with respect to growth, co-
lour, shape and property, do yet all spring
from the same ground, are nourished by
the same showers, and warmed by the same

SERM. sun. The slender cypres, and the huge
xiii. cedar, will flourish in the same plantation ;
the quick-growing lofty elm, and the tardy
humble yew, grow side by side ; and the
same bed displays the bright yellow of the
crocus, the deep blue of the violet, the
lilly's unfullied white, and all the tints of
the gaudy tulip. Are there found, then,
in the earth, peculiar particles already pre-
pared and severally adapted to the produc-
tion of each of these, and are their roots
so formed as to select those only which be-
long to their own plant ? and does the
diversity arise from thence ? Or, is the
whole texture of the plant originally con-
tained in the seed, and gradually unfolding
and enlarging itself as supplied from the
soil with food, does it, by a process of na-
tural chymistry, purify the matter conveyed
to it by its root, and throwing off all that
is superfluous and unfit, retain and dispense
to its several parts that alone which is ade-
quate to give unto each its proper substance,
size and colour ? Now, were the former
the case, the graff of one kind inserted into
the

the stock of another, would, if it bore at all, bear the fruit of the stock, in lieu of that of its parent tree ; while the structure of plants, and the uses of their several parts, justify the opinion, that the last, though no less miraculous, is the true account of their growth. For that nutriment which the root evidently draws from the earth, must be strained through the greater vessels of the stem, before it can enter the leaves ; where again running through those veins which are visible to the naked eye, it is fitted for the channels of the finer shoots, and of those leaves which cover the flower ; but it is not until it has been through the flower itself that it becomes of sufficient purity to enter those vessels wherein the seed of the plant is generated. It is, then, by the changes which the sap undergoes in the plant itself, that it is enabled gradually to fill out its various parts, and contribute to the manifestation of its peculiar beauties : and stupendous as is the thought, there must be contained, in the small compass of an acorn, the original texture of the trunk,
and

SERM. and all the numerous branches into which
XIII. the spreading oak gradually expands itself.
~~~~~

Nor will the manner in which the several elements contribute to forward this growth, the assistance it receives from the frequent returns of day and night, and even from the more turbulent agitations of the air, and the care with which the shoot of the following spring is in the bud, defended against the severity of winter, fail to reward our attention to them, by discovering to us such traces of divine wisdom and power, as will raise in our minds affections that will tend to make us both happier and better. And if from the structure and growth of plants in general, we pass on to consider, how calculated the several species are to supply the various wants of the animal world, our admiration and our gratitude will meet with calls equally awakening.

It did not escape the holy psalmist's notice, that the goodness of Providence extendeth even to the fowls of the air, in
pro-

providing an habitation meet for them. He SERM. speaks of the cedars of Lebanon, which the Lord hath planted, where the birds make their nests. As for the stork, says he, the fir-trees are her house: And shall we overlook the more striking instances of the divine bounty? Shall we forget with what variety of timber adapted to such different uses, He furnishes us by the trees of the forest; the abundance of herbs and fruits, He causeth our gardens to yield; the provender He gives us for the support of our cattle, or the grain for our own subsistence? Living in the midst of these, and being accustomed to behold their production, we perceive no miracle therein. But if reflect on the one hand, how requisite they are to our comfort, and even to our existence; and on the other, that we brought them not into the world with us, but found them ready provided for our accommodation; and that even towards their encrease or continuance, our power goeth not far, since one man planteth and another watereth, but God giveth the encrease; we shall discern,

SER.M. discern, that it is with the fruit of His
XIII. works that the earth is satisfied ; and if we
~~~~~ carry our observation a little further, dis-  
cover that in wisdom He hath ordained  
them all. For those plants which are the  
most wanted, and are of the most extensive  
use, are of the most usual growth, and  
easiest cultivation ; and the products of each  
climate are the best suited to the necessities  
of its inhabitants. For the raising of our  
corn, we want not the shelter of walls, nor  
the borrowed warmth of glasses ; the com-  
mon labour of the husbandman is sufficient :  
and were less than this required, were men  
not obliged to labour that they may gain  
what is necessary to a comfortable subsist-  
ence, the idleness reigning among them  
would soon make the world present one  
scene of uncurbed licentiousness, even more  
abominable than that which is exhibited by  
some of the affluent in the present day.  
But if not content with the common fruits  
of their country, men seek to enjoy those  
which other climates boast ; in the cultiva-  
tion of these, more labour is required, and  
happily

happily so, since such wishes are not raised among the people until they are got into that state of society, and their numbers are so increased, that many want employment, and additional occupations are necessary to furnish business for the additional hands. And yet further, while to those animals whose assistance man needeth in his labours, the wilderness and the desert yield but scanty provision, to the wilder kinds they, throughout the year, afford more ample subsistence. Thus wisely are the products of the ground apportioned! Thus all wait upon the Lord, and He giveth them their meat in due season: He giveth to the beast his food, and feedeth the young ravens which cry; He giveth them, they gather; He openeth His hand, they are filled with good.

Neither are His gifts confined to what is necessary; magnificent in ornament, and ample are His works, affording many gratifications innocent and elegant: the never-satiating green which the leaves display,  
the

SERM. the various hues which both the blossoms  
XIII. and fruits present to the eye, and the dif-  
~~~~~ ferent scents with which the smell is re-  
galed by the plants, afford pleasures which
we may enjoy without sin, and in which
we may indulge without impurity.

Having thus recommended to your con-
templation that scene of divine wisdom,
power, and munificence, which does now
in particular claim our attention, let me
further suggest to you some improve-
ments which the sacred writers notice as
naturally arising from a review of these
things.

At the close of the hymn whence the
text is taken, we find the psalmist ex-
pressing, in the following strain, his thank-
fulness to God, for all the mighty works
he had been contemplating : “ I will sing
unto the Lord as long as I live ; I will sing
praise unto my God while I have my being ;
my meditation of Him shall be sweet ; I
will be glad in the Lord ! ” and concluding
with

with an exhortation to others to render like- SERM.
wife their praises, “ Praife ye the Lord.” XIII.
And verily, such is the call for thanksgiving hereby made on us, that we must be convinced of the most stupid ingratitude, if we fail to render it ; since these mercies are not at a distance that we cannot descry them, neither are they trifling, that we may overlook them, but we feel them in our raiment, we taste them in our food, and we meet them in all our ways. Oh, that men would therefore praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men ! That they would not, with thankless inattention receive, but with grateful hearts *rejoice*, in His bounty ; and while they live on His benevolence, accept likewise the instruction He sets before them in His mode of imparting it !

“ I went by the field of the slothful,” says the wise man, “ and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding, and Lo ! it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof :” And what

SERM. what was the lesson he drew therefrom ?

XIII. Even this ; “ Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep, so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.” See then Nature so constituted by her great Creatour as to yield her fruit only at Labour’s earnest call ; thorns and thistles form the crop of the slothful ; but the diligent she plenteously rewardeth. See the well-cultivated field, how it flourisheth, and that he who keepeth his fig-tree, eateth the fruit thereof ; and hence learn, that idleness was not made for man, nor shall the sluggard be satisfied with encrease.

Again ; “ Consider the lilies of the field how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin : And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grafs of the field which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, Shall He not much more cloath you, O ye of little faith !” Such were the words
of

of our blessed Lord to His disciples ; and SERM.
such is the comfort we are taught to gather XIII.
when menaced with penury, and fearful of
distress, from that scene of divine power
and munificence which even this portion of
the creation displayeth ! The glories with
which the flowers of the field are decked,
evidently leave, at an immeasurable distance,
all the ornaments which human art can
furnish ; it is plain, too, that they are *not*
of their own providing, but received from
their Creatour's hand : And if His provi-
dence so richly extends to creatures thus
mean in comparison with man, Shall it not
much more extend to man himself ? Or
shall aught prevent our partaking of the
blessings of His bounty, but our own ill
behaviour ? That indeed may, and many
and fearful have been the instances of this
exhibited in the world. It is not always
that the labours of man prosper ; the best
course of tillage will not alone ensure a
plentiful crop ; favourable seasons are neces-
sary to crown it with success ; and these
are withholden when the Lord in His justice

SER.M. sees fit, to make a fruitful land barren, for
xiii. the wickedness of those that dwell therein.
~~~~~

But there is yet another lesson resulting from the subject before us ; a lesson humiliating indeed, but salutary, and well adapted to correct the fervour with which we embrace the things of this life, and that forgetfulness which we so frequently betray of the uncertainty of our continuance in it. How often does it happen, that the flower whose beauties we admire in the morning, fadeth ere the day closes ! its colours gone, its odours past, it hangs its drooping head, and only testifies, by its sad remains, the rapidity of its decay ; And is the glory of man more durable ? Are not his days as grafts ? He flourisheth in the morning, but is fallen off and withered at night : Alas ! some of us may never *reach* the evening of life ! What numbers blasted by chilling winds, or parched by the mid-day's sun, suddenly disappear, and their place knoweth them no more ! And how soon may the most florid among us come into that state, in

in which it shall justly be pronounced over SERM.  
him, “ Man that is born of a woman hath <sup>XIII.</sup>  
but a short time to live, and is full of  
mifery : he cometh up, and is cut down  
like a flower : he fleeth as it were a shadow,  
and never continueth in one stay ! ”

But, blessed be God ! the parallel endeth  
not here. Those beauties which every tree,  
and every herb, now disclofeth, have suc-  
ceeded to the ravage of winter : in the year  
past they exhibited the like beauties, but  
gradually decaying as the unfavourable ri-  
gour of the seafon encreased, their vegeta-  
tive powers became at length dormant and  
inactive ; inactive, but not destroyed ; con-  
cealed, but not lost. Behold them rising  
from the tomb of winter, and bursting forth  
with all the vigour of renewed life ! And  
shall not this bring to our minds the won-  
derful fact which was by the power of the  
Lord brought about in the person of our  
blessed Saviour ? Behold a man seemingly  
stricken of God, vexed with all His storms,  
and cut off from the land of the living,

SERM. then laid for a season in the darkness of the  
XIII. sepulchre, but quickly breaking from the  
bands of death, and so unexpectedly appear-  
ing to his followers, that while they yet  
know Him not, they with sorrowful hearts  
complain unto Himself, that they had  
trusted, that it had been He who would  
have redeemed Israel. Mark the grain,  
which awhile ago was buried in the earth,  
now springing up with a new body, and  
ye will then see the absurdity of starting  
speculative difficulties against the doctrine  
of a resurrection, and the folly of putting  
the questions, How are the dead raised up,  
or with what body do they come? Behold,  
to every seed God giveth its own body;  
and that He will do so likewise to every  
man, He hath given us assurance, in that  
He hath raised up Christ as the first fruits  
from the grave; promising, that to those  
who have true faith in Him, and who are,  
indeed, His disciples, the valley of the  
shadow of death, shall prove a passage to  
the mount of God, to the heavenly Jerusa-  
lem, and to an innumerable company of  
angels,

angels, to the general assembly and church SERM.  
of the first-born, which are written in Hea- XIII.  
ven, and to God the Judge of all, and to  
the spirits of just men made perfect, and to  
Jesus the Mediatour of the new covenant.

These are the improvements which the contemplation of the beautiful scene the earth now presents, naturally suggests to us; let not then the season pass without accepting them; learn to admire and adore the all-glorious perfections of the Creatour; sleep not over his bounty, but industriously employ the powers, and cultivate the means of happiness He hath given you, firmly trust in his exuberant goodness, dread his power, and stand in awe of His justice: be mindful of the frailty of your own existence; and remember, that uncertain as it is in its present state, and dark as appears the hour which closes it, the infinite mercy of God does, through the mediation of His Son, now offer you opportunity, an opportunity, if once lost, never to be recovered, of securing to yourselves a better life, and

SERM. exchanging the terrors of death, and the  
XIII. night of the grave, for the joys of a tri-  
umphant resurrection, and the ever bloom-  
ing happiness of His eternal day.

# SERMON XIV.

ON THE HARVEST.

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GEN. VIII. 22.

*While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease.*

THESE words, in which the sacred SER. XIV. historian has recorded the divine purpose never more while this world itself shall endure, to interrupt the stated succession of the seasons, and of the alternate periods for labour and for rest given unto men, will furnish Christians with an answer to the question ascribed by St. Peter to the scoffers of the last days, “ Where is the promise of His coming? for since the

SERM. fathers fell asleep, all things continue as  
XIV. they were from the beginning of the crea-  
tion.” For if it has been declared by reve-  
lation, that the course of the material world  
should suffer no considerable interruption,  
its having yet suffered none such, yields  
testimony in favour of revelation; and,  
consequently, of the truth of that promise,  
which the wicked naturally wish may never  
be fulfilled, that the Lord will return to  
render to every man according to his works.  
Nay, further, since in the following words  
of scripture, “ Thus saith the Lord: If  
ye can break my covenant of the day, and  
my covenant of the night, and that there  
should not be day and night in their season,  
then may also my covenant be broken with  
David my servant, that he should not have  
a son to reign upon his throne; and with  
the Levites the priests, my ministers,” the  
stability of the former covenant is pointed  
out as a pledge of that of the other, with  
the full completion of which, our blessed  
Saviour’s second coming is so necessarily  
connected, the uninterrupted performance  
of

of it forms, under these circumstances, no SERM.  
less than a perpetual admonition, that He <sup>xiv.</sup>  
whose word supports the one, will, in His  
own good time, fulfil the other also.

Of the first, as far as it involves in it a promise that the world shall never more be destroyed by water, He hath instituted a sign: “ And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud; and it shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the earth.” Hence even among the Heathen, when they had forgotten the real occasion of this token being appointed, the rainbow was still considered as a sign from Heaven; and was personified by the poets under the character of a Messenger between their feigned gods and men. But should that appearance which, although from the defect of their information it caused them to entertain superstitious opinions, and to run into idolatrous practices, plainly made a deep

SERM. a deep religious impression on their minds,  
xiv. be so frequently seen by us, who are ac-  
quainted with the everlasting covenant of  
which it has been appointed the sign, with-  
out recalling to our remembrance that hand,  
by which the whole system of Heaven and  
earth is supported? Or should we suffer  
the several seasons continually to revolve in  
their regular succession, without devoutly  
acknowledging, how much we owe to God  
for causing seed time and harvest, and cold  
and heat, and summer and winter, and day  
and night, ceaselessly to succeed each other?

That we may be guiltless of an omission  
so ungrateful at the present season, which  
seems particularly to call for our praise and  
thanksgiving, because it is that which  
crowns the rest, by bringing into our gar-  
ners those fruits of the earth, to the pro-  
duction of which all the other seasons in  
their turns contributed, I have selected the  
words of the text for the subject of my pre-  
sent address to you; purposing to make use  
of the opportunity which they afford me, of  
remind-

reminding you how necessary the several SERM.  
periods mentioned in the words before us XIV.  
are for carrying on the great work of vege-  
tation, and conducting the plants, by which  
the animal world is supported, through the  
various stages of their growth, from the  
first appearance of the blade, to the time  
when they are ripe for the harvest; and  
thence to proceed to state to you some prac-  
tical inferences, which naturally arise from  
a review of this portion of the divine wis-  
dom and goodness towards us.

I may justly, I think, suppose, that there  
is no man who, when he either casts his  
eye upon the fields before the sickle is put  
to them, or sees the reapers scattered over  
the land, or observes the wains groaning  
under the loads which they are bearing to  
the barn, does not feel his soul affected  
with a sense of the bounty of that hand  
which thus scatters plenty over the earth,  
and of the greatness of Him, Who hath so  
framed it, that it is thus abundant in its  
productions. But to those who are not un-  
accustomed

SERM. accustomed to contemplate their Creatour's  
xiv. works as such, and meditate on the traces  
of infinite wisdom and goodness discernible  
therein, these objects, as opening a still  
wider field for observation and praise, yield  
much greater delight. Yet the full satis-  
faction to be received from them cannot be  
enjoyed even by such, unless they take into  
consideration various circumstances which  
are wonderfully combined for forwarding  
and conducting to its due perfection every  
plant the earth produces. Our present re-  
view must be principally confined to what  
the several seasons contribute to these ends.

Of the seasons, then, that which may,  
to a superficial observer, appear adverse, is,  
in reality, friendly to vegetation, the very  
winter itself performing a part of essential  
importance towards the plenty of the en-  
suing seasons. Vegetables draw merely  
from the earth itself much less of that  
which supports and enlarges them, than is,  
probably, by most men imagined. The  
chief part of their nutriment is conveyed  
by

by water : and the air contributes much to SERM.  
their preservation. Now of the former of XIV. these elements, the winter yields the great supply by its rains and snow ; while by its winds and frosts it purifies the latter. Necessary is that abundance of the first which then descends upon our lands ; both as to its quantity, being the principal portion of the stock from whence the encrease of the future year is to be supplied ; and as to its quality, it having acquired by the natural process it has gone through, of exhalation from the earth, and of impregnation in the air, all the softness and penetrating powers which render it capable of promoting their growth, and rendering the plants prolific. And without the winds and frost, vegetable as well as animal life would suffer much from that impurity of the air which these contribute to remove. While the latter of them penetrating into the ground does, when on the approach of spring it is resolved, break its clods, and prepare it for the reception of seeds, and render it easy to be penetrated by the first tender fibres which  
the

SERM. the roots put forth : and the former quickly  
xiv. drying from the branches of the trees, the  
superabundance of that moisture (which,  
though necessary to the land, if suffered to  
remain on them, would render them dis-  
eased, and cause the bud in which the shoot  
is wrapped, to rot) prevent great and wide-  
extending damage.

The soil being thus prepared by winter,  
the feed time next succeeds, mild in its  
temperature, neither impeding vegetation  
by intense cold, nor scorching the infant  
plants by the excess of its heat ; bringing  
with it frequent showers to water the newly-  
sown land, and gales, which shaking the  
plants, not only loosen the earth about their  
roots, thus forwarding their growth, but  
agitating so strongly the trunks, branches,  
and leaves, promote a freer circulation of  
the sap contained in them ; and thus throw  
off whatever being unremoved might dimi-  
nish their vigour, and obstruct their growth.  
The luxuriance of this period affords a  
covering to the ground against the heat of  
the

the ensuing season, and intercepting, by SERM.  
innumerable leaves, the rays of the sun, XIV.  
cause their power to be spent on those parts  
where it is most necessary, while the roots  
kept cool are able to perform their function,  
and supply additional nourishment, until  
the fruit arrived at its due size no longer  
needs such.

To bring this to pass, however, summer  
suns are necessary, by which the juice of  
the plants undergoes, as it were, an higher  
distillation, whereby is produced that fine  
flour with which the seed vessels are first  
filled, and which, by the continuance of  
the heat drying away the leaves that cover  
them, is afterwards consolidated into a body,  
and forms the seed itself: and which seed,  
if not gathered now by man, having by  
the same means that coat which contains it  
dried until it bursts, falls to the ground for  
the supply of plants for the ensuing year.  
Thus wonderfully is the succession of sea-  
sons constituted to bring the fruits of the  
earth to that perfection in which they are  
gathered,

SERM. gathered, and made the support of animal  
xiv. life. In warmer climes, indeed, the annual  
revolution proceeds not through the same  
periods; but that purification of the air of  
which their inhabitants would otherwise be  
deprived through want of the winter's  
frosts, is for them provided by means of  
more violent rains, of lightning, and of  
hurricanes. While the products of their  
lands require greater heat to bring them to  
maturity; and without such fruits, wisely  
and mercifully suited to their climes, they  
would soon perish from countries on which  
the sun directly darteth down his rays.

Neither should we pass, without observation, the utility of the shorter periods of day and night, and their mutual succession to the same important end, the growth of every plant. Those vessels which the heat of the sun had, during the day, caused to expand, and not only supplied with sap from the root, but opened their numerous pores to receive the dews which fall on his descent, being, by the coldness of the night, rapidly

rapidly compressed, thereby force the juices SERM.  
with which they are filled every way, and XIV.  
make the buds to shoot. And hence it is  
that all vegetables grow more by night than  
day; except, perhaps, during showers,  
when the rain fills the pores, and its cold-  
ness does the office of the night air.

Thus have all the various vicissitudes to  
which our atmosphere is subject to their use,  
and thus necessary to all who dwell on the  
earth, is the constant continuance of the  
divine determination mentioned in the text,  
“ While the earth remaineth, seed time and  
harvest, and cold and heat, and summer  
and winter, and day and night, shall not  
cease.” Is it not ours, therefore, by re-  
flecting on what God herein doth for man,  
to strive to learn what it becomes us, under  
the receipt of these continued mercies, on  
our part to do?

Behold then, first, the call and encourage-  
ment here holden forth to unwearied dili-  
gence in our labour: since in every step we

SERM. take, God is working with us, amply re-  
XIV. warding all our pains by the fertility to  
which His seasons give birth, and yet having  
so constituted the earth, that in proportion  
as man ceases to exert himself, his supply  
of food decreases. This lesson, as shewing  
how greatly an idle life differs from that  
which our Maker would, that we should  
lead, merits both the most serious attention  
of individuals, who very frequently seem  
to think, that they are at liberty to spend, or  
rather to waste their time in sloth, or what  
is next to sloth, the most trifling amuse-  
ments, provided they injure not others ; as  
if He who, in the material world, hath  
made nothing but to a good end, had yet  
endowed man, the creature to whom He has  
put so many others into subjection, with all  
his wondrous powers of actions for none ;  
and the consideration of communities, which  
sometimes overlook that which, if duly  
attended to, would preserve in them a mea-  
sure of good order, integrity, and hap-  
piness, which, I much fear, has by this in-  
attention, departed from our own country  
never

never to return ; that God hath, in His SERM.  
natural world, taught the same thing which  
His apostle Paul delivers in the form of a  
precept : “ For even when we were with  
you, this we commanded you, that if any  
would not work, neither should he eat.”

~~~~~  
XIV.

Another point, suggested by the review we have taken, is that of our utter dependence on the goodness of God. Unless He were mindful of His covenant for ever, and of His promise from generation to generation, the Heavens over our head might be as brass, and the earth under us as iron : we might carry out much seed into the field, and bring but little in : we might plant vineyards and dress them, but neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes from them. Reflections of this kind are too seldom made, and too little encouraged among men. Content with knowing the more immediate causes by which they are supplied with food and raiment, they look no farther, but, in the language of holy writ, sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense

SERM. cense unto their drag. Yet this our dependence is not such that the recollection of it need either hurt our pride, or lessen our security. To be the objects of a monarch's favour, is flattering to the mind ; to have the support of sovereign power, naturally raises confidence. When the blessings we enjoy, flow from the benevolence of the King eternal, almighty, invisible, the only wise God ; when it is by the word of the Father of all mercies, with Whom there is no variableness, or shadow of turning, that we live ; as our obligations encrease in proportion to the greatness and constancy of our benefactor. For what other sensation is there in this case room, than that of the sincerest gratitude ? of gratitude, leading us not to conceal, but to proclaim how greatly we are indebted to Him : not, indeed, by ostentation in our religious acts, but by an unremitting attention to His laws, by readily joining in those publick acknowledgements which His church renders, especially those of the sabbath, (His own appointment of which makes the neglect of it

it an act of positive disobedience, of real SERM.
revolt from His authority) and by teaching XIV.
our households, and our children after us,
to love and to fear Him, as their Maker,
their Preserver, and their Judge.

Neither do the improvements of the subject before us stop here. By reflecting on the never-ceasing bounty of Heaven to ourselves, there is an hope that our hearts may be softened into benevolence towards our brethren: from the measure with which it has been meted unto us, we may learn to measure unto others, and be ever after our power ready to give, glad to distribute; and from observing how our heavenly Father maketh His sun to rise on the evil, and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust; giving even to men who walk in their own ways fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness, we may discern the superior glory of loving our enemies, blessing them that curse us, doing good to them that hate us, and praying for them which spitefully use us,

SERM. we may become the children of our Father
XIV. which is in Heaven.


But yet, further, if God hath made such bountiful provision for the sons of men as to external goods, Can it be believed, that He would leave the race abandoned in other respects, and not furnish them with what is no less important to their happiness, instruction in the truth, the food of the mind? Yet, if our Gospel come not from Him, this He must have done; Or, if the effects of His benevolence be so great in this transient and uncertain state, How gloriously must they shine forth in the everlasting kingdom prepared for those who love Him? Reasoning after this manner from what our merciful Creatour has done for us as to our natural, to what He will do for us as to our spiritual state, from the comforts with which He supplieth us during our short stay here, to what we may hope for in those mansions where we are to abide for ever, is making a wise and the proper use of the objects now before us, rendering them not snares

to

to entrap our affections, and attach us to what we cannot keep, but subjects of encouragement to press forward to the high prize of our calling. Nor to this end are there wanting, in the holy scriptures, suggestions of a similarity between man in his temporal state, and the vegetables which he cultivates for his support. Like them, he is termed a plant ; like them, he is described as flourishing by the protection of the Almighty, and as withering when that is withdrawn : and, like them, (an observation especially adapted to the present season) as having, when ripe for the harvest, the sickle put unto him, and, if good, being gathered like wheat into the garner of the master, and, if bad, like weeds burnt with unquenchable fire. Let us therefore, when we look on the fields that are reaped, recollect, that the period is approaching in which the world will be the same ; and the things which now remain according to promise, will, according to promise, likewise be done away ; and the following words of Him that sitteth on the throne be fulfilled, “ Behold, I make all things new !”

XIV.
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# SERMON XV.

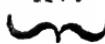
ON THE SIGNS OF TIMES.

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REV. III. 19.

*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be  
zealous, therefore, and repent.*

**T**HE epistles to the seven churches of SERM.  
Asia, contained in this and the fore- xv.  
going chapter, have, by interprters of great  
name, been supposed not to relate solely to  
the state of those churches at the time when  
St. John was commanded to send them, but  
to contain, likewise, a prophetick outline of  
the state of the whole church in general  
during seven distinct periods, which were  
to succeed each other between the time of  
the apostle's receiving the revelation and that  
of

SER.M. of our blessed Saviour's coming again : and  
xv. this supposition is confirmed first, by the  
 proclamation repeated at the end of each epistle, " He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit faith unto the churches," so similar to the charge with which our Lord's discourse to His apostles on the signs of His coming again, as recorded by St. Mark, is closed, " And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch :" and, secondly, by the state of the church in these several periods having actually corresponded with the description of it contained in the epistles.

But if this be so, it will be natural to ask, Where is the period during which we ourselves live described ? In the epistle it may be answered, to the church of the Laodiceans, which is the last of the seven, and from which I have taken the words of my text, so justly descriptive of the cause of the afflictions now poured on Christendom, and of the only means by which we can render our prayers for their removal acceptable :

acceptable : “ As many as I love, I rebuke SERM.  
and chasten : be zealous, therefore, and re- XV.  
pent.”

The cause, ye see, here assigned for the chastening of the Lord, is His love towards us ; which moves Him to try all means to bring us to repentance, that we may not be condemned with the world ; and since these chastisements consequently cannot be removed, until they have affected the counsels of His mercy, or we are become obdurate, and the objects of final judgements, the only means by which we can secure the acceptance of our petitions for the removal of them, must be those of sincere repentance and real amendment.

But there is, in the words before us too, a suggestion, that we do in one particular more especially stand in need of such amendment, that of religious zeal and heartfelt attachment to the cause of God and His Christ : “ Be zealous, therefore.” And whether the character given of the Laodiceans

SERMON. ceans in this respect be as I have asserted,  
XV. applicable to the present generation of Christians, and to us of this land among the rest, ye may judge, from the particulars of the epistle which I will now state to you, compared with those points of our own conduct, which I shall also call to your remembrance.

“ I know thy works, (said our Lord to this type of ourselves) that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and encreased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked; I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.”

Behold,

Behold, then, two characteristics here SERM.  
described; the one self-sufficiency, and the other that to which a conceit of our own worth and attainments so naturally gives rise, indifference to the service of our Maker: and consider with yourselves, whether the conduct of the present age be not strongly marked with both. In the whole history of the human race was there ever a generation that treated past times with the overbearing insolence that the present does? If we listen to the swarm of writers with whose works so many presses daily tremble, would they not fain persuade us, that they are the enlighteners of mankind, and that all who have gone before them were, in fact, the slaves of ignorance, superstition, or error? and has not this malady spread like a gangrene? Is it not perceptible in the common conversation of the age? Has it not infected the language of the senate, the bar, and even of that where affectation should least appear, the pulpit? Nay, has it not descended to the artisan and the mechanick? who will tell you that the present

SERM. are not like former times, when the people  
xv. were unacquainted with their rights, but  
now they will think for themselves, being  
as able to do so as those above them? On  
questions of religion, indeed, our present  
more immediate concern, it seems to have  
shewn itself both earlier and stronger than  
on any other. One sect has long prevailed  
in Christendom, who having made an idol  
of their own reason, find neither the words  
of inspiration of sufficient authority, nor  
the wisdom of God wise enough for them.  
*No* authority is too high for them to attack,  
*no* doctrine too important for them to reject.  
Even the means by which God is pleased  
to reconcile the world to Himself, must be  
submitted to their judgement, and the opera-  
tions of that eternal Spirit, who is above  
all, through all, and in all, must accord  
with their imaginations, and the nature of  
their Creatour be to be comprehended by  
these self-sufficient sophists, who think they  
have no need of either atonement or grace.  
The propagation of opinions like these,  
among a generation already thinking them-

selves rich in knowledge, has proved like SERM.  
adding fuel to fire, and every petty dispu- xv.  
tant now thinks himself able to judge of  
the decisions of the wisest who went before  
him, and would have his rejection of their  
judgement be considered as a certain proof  
of the soundness of his own.

But while self-conceit has thus produced a rage for innovation in every branch in our own country, in what dreadful shapes has it shewn itself, what havock has it made in other parts of Christendom! There the pretences of instructing, improving, and exalting mankind to a degree which those of past ages never knew, hoped, or thought of, have affected the people like an intoxicating potion, and their leaders breaking down every ordinance that had been deemed necessary for the preservation of human society, destroying every thing beneficial, have opposed and exalted themselves above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, and discarding revelation, have endeavoured to obliterate from the minds

SER.M. minds of men all recollection of their dependence on their Maker, by abolishing the observation of the sabbath, observed from the creation of the world in acknowledgement of it. And what is a novel occurrence among men, armed hosts have been marched from one sea to the other, not to plant a new religion among the nations; but to drive faith from the earth: while their commanders daringly vaunted their own apostacy and rebellion against Heaven, by shamefisly pretending to acknowledge the dissentient creeds of different countries, as long as such hypocrisy could forward their designs on those who dwell therein.

'To lukewarmness in religion, to the decay of all sincere attachment to the faith, may the rapid progress of those pernicious opinions, of which such are the bitter fruits, be too in part ascribed; as well as that cold insensibility with which, for a long time, so many governments viewed their extensive diffusion. Although, indeed, the littleness

neſſ

ness which these betrayed, though by many SERM.  
ways loudly admonished of their danger, <sup>XV.</sup>  
and the blindness with which so great a  
portion of several nations have rushed to  
their own destruction, should seem to indi-  
cate, that the threatening contained in the  
passage of the text is already executed on  
them, and that the Lord hath already  
spued them out of His mouth: while His  
judgements on them are proceeding in the  
manner thus foretold by the prophet, “ Be-  
hold, the name of the Lord cometh from  
far, burning with His anger, and the bur-  
then thereof is heavy: His lips are full of  
indignation, and His tongue as a devouring  
fire: and His breath as an overflowing  
stream shall reach to the midst of the neck,  
to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity:  
and there shall be a bridle in the jaws of  
the people causing them to err.”

“ Suppose ye, (said our blessed Lord to  
those that told Him of the Galileans, whose  
blood Pilate had mingled with their sacri-  
fices) that these Galileans were sinners above

SERM. all the Galileans, because they suffered such  
xv. things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye  
~~~~~ repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Thus  
teaching us to reason from the divine judgements
that overtake others, to the danger
of our own state, from whom the same
sentence is withholden only by the forbearance
of God. When, then, we see "the
whirlwind of the Lord going forth with
fury," (Jer. xxxiv. 23.) and that "a con-
tinuing whirlwind," and have been warned,
that "it shall fall with pain upon the head
of the wicked," Does it not become us to
consider, whether we ourselves be not in
truth of that description? When, too, the
portion of punishment that has reached us
does not exceed the measure of rebuke and
chastisement, while on so many others it
has been extended even to destruction, Does
it not behove us to make use of the time
granted us by the divine mercy, and ex-
amine how far we partake in that guilt
which is menaced with overwhelming in-
dignation from Him? "So, then, because
thou

thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." SERM.
XV.



Now if we fairly consider how far we have manifested this disposition, shall we not find that it has been long working among us : from those who have affected to consider religion as a mere instrument of policy, contributing to the tranquillity and easy government of the state, to those who have imagined all modes of faith equally acceptable in the sight of God, provided they are professed with equal sincerity ? Shall we not find that it shews itself in a lamentable and extensive neglect of the means of religion ? The fact itself cannot be disputed. Family devotion is fallen into I am afraid, I may say, general disuse : the attendance in the assemblies of the church, even on the Lord's day, is extremely small in proportion to the number dwelling in the different parishes, and what a still greater disparity is there between those who come to church, and the few, the very few, that are found willing to join in commemorating

SERM. the death of our Saviour until His coming
xv. again! And can ye think this conduct is—
Can ye venture to give to it the name of
zealous? Be not deceived: our Lord re-
quires it of us to seek the kingdom of God
and His righteousness *before all* things.
This ye know. Say, then, whether ye do
not pursue the means of temporal prospe-
rity, of worldly good, with more earnest-
ness, with greater warmth, than ye thus
cultivate the means of religion? For if ye
do, your own hearts will convict you of
want of zeal as to the latter; and “if our
heart condemn us, God is greater than our
heart, and knoweth all things.”

The publick character of a country is so generally thought to be affected by the prevailing manners of its inhabitants, that we reason with confidence from the former to the latter: May we not thus then argue, that the neglect into which are fallen many salutary laws, enacted for the preservation of the morals of the people in this country, the general inattention of the magistrates
to

to the execution of such statutes, and to SERM,
the whole of that portion of their duty, xv.
and the discouragement and opposition with
which the few who would perform it meet,
indicate a general indifference of the inha-
bitants of the land to the preservation of a
conduct suitable to the profession of the
Gospel, and that prophaneness and blas-
phemy, sabbath-breaking and drunkenness,
impurity of every kind, and that potent
enemy of every virtue, gaming, are deemed
among us crimes of not sufficient magni-
tude to merit animadversion. When the
legislature of a country is apprized that its
former laws are either so fallen into disuse,
or by the discovery of new evasions, are so
eluded, as no longer to answer the purposes
for which they were originally made, if
there be any earnest desire, any real inten-
tion to effect those purposes, if there be
any zeal, the laws deficient will be imme-
diately re-enacted, or amended; and where
such laws relate to the preservation of chris-
tianity among a people, their being per-
mitted to become useless, is in itself no

SERM. weak proof that the community in which
XV. they once were executed is become luke-warm in the faith of Christ. But should such legislature absolutely refuse (as has lately been the case among us) an application expressly made for the amendment of laws for the securing the honour due to God; What is this but saying, we will not that He should reign over us? And then, alas! unless humble acknowledgement, the sincerest repentance, and early amendment prevail, to have the provoked judgement averted, can shepherds like these expect a sentence less severe than that which the Lord pronounced against the husbandmen of His own vineyard, that “the kingdom of God shall be taken from them, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof?”

Again; it is far from consistent with zeal in the service of a king to suffer his subjects to be seduced from their allegiance by the propagators of doctrines contrary to his authority, a remark confirmed by the practice

practice of our own legislature, which has SERM.
enacted statutes for the repression of those xv.
who preach disaffection, or spread sedition
in the nation. But has the same care been
shewn in the cause of the King of kings ?
Has not, on the contrary, the circumspection
which our forefathers used on this
point, been laid aside, and some of the pro-
visions which their wisdom made, been re-
voked with scarcely the shadow of a reason,
and a door been thus opened to the teachers
of that corrupted church, from whose abo-
minations our ancestors were zealous to
cleanse, and to preserve their country ? And
have we not thus contradicted the warning
voice which cries, “ Come out of her my
people, that ye be not partakers of her sins,
and that ye receive not of her plagues ;” and
even at the time when her sins have reached
unto Heaven, and God appears by the judge-
ments that are now falling on the countries
of her communion, to have remembered
their iniquities, Have we not proclaimed,
“ Return to her ye who will, for no harm
shall happen unto you ? ” And can we

SERM. wonder if after this, something more than
XV. mere want of zeal in preserving the purity
of the Gospel among us, the plagues poured
upon her reach, in their effects, even to
ourselves ?

The affectation of generosity of mind, (termed in the spurious language of the present day, liberality of sentiment) superior to that of former ages, manifested in this case, is, in fact, an instance of that self-conceit, by which our age is characterized in the prophecy before us. If ye listen to our professions, we possess more Christian charity, have juster notions of religion, and hold founder maxims of policy, than the generations before us: yet attend to facts, and we have, in the first place, shewn our Christian charity, by proving ourselves much less solicitous about the future salvation of our people: in the second place, the juster notions of religion we possess, are manifested by our attending less to the only source of sure instruction in it, revelation, by our neglecting the means of it,

it, and exposing ourselves to be blown about SERM.
by every wind of doctrine, and letting the ^{XV.}
influence of it appear less on our practice:
and, lastly, the soundness of our policy is
made known by our again introducing to
our country, those through whom the liberty
of it was before nearly overthrown, and
opening a door to offences which we see
have produced consequences of the most
lamentable and fearful kind in various
others. And now, arguing from these pre-
mises, on the truth of which ye may your-
selves determine, which character is, in
reality, most applicable to us, that we give
ourselves in saying, we are rich and en-
creased with goods, or that supplied by the
passage of Scripture we are confidering,
“Thou knowest not that thou art wretched,
and miserable, and poor, and blind, and
naked.”

In truth, nothing is more likely to lead
either individuals or nations to think highly
of themselves than an encrease of earthly
treasures: the observation is in every body's
mouth,

SERM. mouth, and general experience confirms it.
xv. When the land of Judah was replenished
~~~~~ from the east, its inhabitants had the harp  
and the viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine  
in their feasts: but they regarded not the  
work of the Lord, neither considered the  
operation of His hands. Yet had they the  
writings of Moses which threatened them  
with all the curses written in his law,  
whenever they forsook the testimonies of  
the Lord their God: and the Lord, too,  
had begun to cut the neighbouring king-  
dom of Israel short for the transgressions  
committed in it. Thus, too, have we seen  
the wrath of God fall on the nations near  
us, while, by the passage of the text, and  
many others, we are warned of the evils  
that must overtake us, if we do not repent.  
The correction we at present feel has, in a  
manner that calls most loudly for our admira-  
tion and our gratitude, fallen principally on  
that of which we are proudest, which has  
contributed mostly to our corruption, and  
principally damped our zeal, I mean our  
wealth. As if the long-suffering of the  
Lord

Lord would kindly point out to us by this SERM.  
mean, how little that to which we are so  
much inclined to trust, can help us in the  
day of wrath. And shall this kindness  
make no impression on our hearts? Shall  
not these instances of His love induce us to  
strive to make ourselves more worthy of  
it? Shall not these fatherly rebukes and  
chastisements make us zealous and repent?

xv.

The blindness which has, in part, hap-  
pened unto us, and which prevents our fee-  
ing how miserably we have departed from  
the line of conduct prescribed by the Gof-  
pel, can only be removed by the true light;  
And can we hope that that light will mani-  
fest Himself unto us, unles<sup>s</sup> we *zealously*  
seek for His illumination? Do but, with  
the little strength ye have yet remaining,  
apply yourselves earnestly to practise all  
which ye already know to be the duties of  
religion: give in reality that preference to  
the things belonging to the kingdom of  
God, which a very little consideration will  
convince you is justly due unto them; and  
be

SERM. be assured, that to the earnest prayer which  
XV. forms part of those duties, ye will meet  
with such returns as will open your eyes to  
our real situation, not only in regard to the  
unrighteousness of our own behaviour, but  
in respect likewise to the urgent calls now  
made on us to repent without delay, because  
the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

When our Lord rebuked the Jews because they could distinguish the signs of the weather, but were not able to discern those of the times, the period of the destruction of Jerusalem was not, I conceive there is reason to think, at many more years distance from that generation, than the time of His return to take vengeance on those who know not God, and obey not His Gospel, is from ourselves. I have already stated to you that the prophecy so descriptive of the period in which we live, is that which relates to the very last state of the church previous to that awful event: and the great characteristick I have pointed out, lukewarmness in religion, is especially noticed

ticed by our blessed Saviour, in the account SERM. of the signs of His coming, recorded by St. Matthew; and encouragement not to give way to it, added to the mention of it;

xv.

“ And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” While other symptoms of the end being near at hand encrease upon us. Of these it is ours to put one another in mind, and rouse each other to be zealous in preparing to meet our divine Master; both from the consideration that we must be left without excuse, if after such warnings of its approach that day overtake us unawares, and we be found drowned in the cares or pleasures of life, smiting our fellow-servants, or eating and drinking with the drunken: and from the glorious prospect of the honour and happiness that those will inherit, who resolutely adhering to the words of Christ, during the trials that remain to be undergone, shall either die in the Lord, or tarrying until He come, be of

Him

SERM. Him found watching, and made, according  
xv. to His promise, rulers of all His goods.  
*~~~~~*

In discharge, then, of this my duty, I have now declared unto you, brethren, that this is the last time, and as ye have heard that Antichrist should come, even now there not only are many Antichrists, but that power which the spirit of prophecy especially pointed out as Antichrist, and which is not to be finally destroyed until the coming of the Lord Himself, I mean, that of the pope of Rome, who, by calling himself the vicar of Christ, took to himself this title in one sense of it, as it belonged unto him in another, because he opposed the true doctrine of our Lord ; this power, I say, has now continued very nearly the whole time expressly assigned to him : while such is the present situation of things, as to render it reasonable to suppose, that something very important in his history will very soon take place. Another power too, that of the Turkish empire, on the removal of which the last very few years of suffering will comincence,

commence, seems to hold his present station SERM.  
at the will of two neighbouring monarchs XV.  
more powerful than his self, and who too,  
may plead the example of their predeces-  
sours, for dividing neighbouring dominions  
between them: and whenever this power  
be removed, those days will actually begin  
that are shortened for the elect's sake; and,  
consequently, the sign of the Son of man  
very quickly appear in the clouds of Hea-  
ven. When then, He is, as it were, even  
at the doors, what counsel can we take but  
that of the text, “ Be zealous, therefore,  
and repent ?”

Let me then, in the last place, exhort,  
nay, let me beseech you, not to reject this  
counsel, as ye would wish for support un-  
der the encreasing afflictions of the present  
time, as ye would wish to avoid evils in-  
comparably severer, and which must endure  
for ever and ever: as ye would wait with-  
out horrour for the appearance of your al-  
mighty Judge, and receive from Him  
crowns of glory and immortality. For if  
these

SERM. these considerations will not prevail with  
xv. you, I have no more to add ; but must con-  
clude with the impressive words of Moses,  
“ Behold, I have this day set life and death  
before you, therefore chuse life, that ye  
may live !”

# SERMON XVI.

ON THE NATIVITY.

---

ST. LUKE II. 11.

*For unto you is born this day in the city of  
David a Saviour, which is Christ the  
Lord.*

THESE words contain what the heavenly Messenger announced to the shepherds, as “ good tidings of great joy to all people.” On what account they were so, I have before explained to you in a discourse on the predictions relating to the Messiah: and in that, too, I laid before you the characteristicks by which this great person might certainly be distinguished, whenever He should appear. However

SERM.  
XVI.

VOL. III.                    x                    adapted,

SERM. adapted, therefore, those points may seem  
XVI. to a discourse on this day, or how pro-  
perly soever coming under the words of  
the text, I shall not now speak to them  
again, but make it my present busines to  
enquire into the ground and meaning of the  
title of Christ here given to the Saviour,  
and into the relation indicated to subsist  
between Him and us, by the term Lord ;  
and close my addrefs to you with consider-  
ing what obligations that relation confers  
on us.

Now the term Christ being, as is well known, a Greek word, equivalent to the Hebrew word Mefiah, and both signifying anointed, it became particularly applicable to the Saviour, because He was to be invested with three offices, to each of which, under the law, admission was given by unction ; those of priest, prophet, and king : and because, too, He was to receive an unction before unknown in the world, that of the Holy Ghost, which descended on Him in a bodily shape.

That

That the priests were anointed to their office, we learn from the divine commandment to Moses, preserved in the fortieth chapter of the book of Exodus, which runs thus: “ And thou shalt put upon Aaron the holy garments, and anoint him, and sanctify him; that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office:” and that the Messiah was to bear this character, was foreshewn by the word of the Lord in the mouth of the psalmist; “ The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent; thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek.” A point worthy of particular attention, because, as the apostle to the Hebrews argues, if perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (under which the Israelites received the law) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedek, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. And thus are we supplied from their own scriptures with a refutation of the Jews’ conceit,

SERM. that their ceremonial law was not to be  
xvi. abrogated by the coming of Christ. As  
~~~~ long as the authority of that law continued,  
no one but a descendant of Aaron could
minister in the priest's office ; and carefully
did the individuals of the family preserve
their genealogy ; while the fate of Korah
and his company held forth a most aweful
warning, that no man who was not duly
called, should presume to take this ministry
to himself : but Christ was announced as
appointed to the priesthood, after an order
in which there was no mention of father,
or of mother, or of descent ; the ministry
of which was not confined to a particular
people, but, like the salvation promised by
this High Priest, to extend to the Gentiles,
and reach unto the end of the earth. And
as the priest's office was to offer sacrifice,
and make intercession and atonement for the
people, entering once a year into the Holy
of holies, for the performance of the most
solemn act of this last, so our blessed Lord,
having by one offering of Himself, per-
fected for ever them that are sanctified,
entered

entered into the Heaven itself, where He SERM.
liveth for ever to make intercession for us. ^{XVI.}
Since, then, to the thoughtful son of Israel,
there must have appeared in the sacrifices
which were continually offered, in the blood
of bulls and goats, no natural efficacy to
take away sins, and yet he was sure that
these offerings were not the offspring of
human fancy, but the ordinances of divine
wisdom, had it once been suggested to him,
that the benefits attached to these were so
merely on account of their relation to better
things to come, Would he not with joy
have received the explication, and grate-
fully viewed the beautiful correspondence
between the emblematical institutions of the
law, and the mercies of God, unveiled in
the Gospel? Some such were found in the
generation to whom Christ himself preached:
and the prejudices of the present Jews will
scarcely be met with so great promise of
success in overcoming them, as with argu-
ments drawn from the types of the Mosaic
law: by such arguments we may trium-
phantly prove, that in Jesus these were ful-

SERM. filled, and that He was ordained of God
XVI. first, as there could be no remission without blood, to put away sin by His own blood, and then to appear in the presence of God for us, an High Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedeck.

Of the introduction to the prophetick office by unction, an instance is preserved in the history of Elisha, whom Elijah was commanded to anoint to be prophet in his room ; and as we find no other instance of the kind recorded, yet are told that a double portion of the Spirit rested on that prophet, we may well presume, that by this peculiar distinction, it was designed to mark him for a type of Christ. The designation of this great person Himself under that character, is contained in these words of the Lord to Moses, to be found in the eighteenth chapter of the book of Deuteronomy ; “ I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in His mouth ; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

him. And it shall come to pass, that who- SERM.
soever will not hearken unto my words ^{XVI.}
which he shall speak in my name, I will
require it of him."

Now the office of a prophet, ye know, was not confined to that to which we at present generally restrain our ideas of it, the foretelling of future events; but extended to interpreting the will of God to the people: he resolved their doubts, he reproved them for their transgressions, he delivered to them, in the name of the Lord, promises of future blessings on obedience, and denounced judgements to come: he was (according to that sublime description of his appointment given to the prophet Jeremiah) "set over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant." In these several particulars, therefore, did our Lord act; He explained the real meaning of the law and the prophets, and made known the whole will of His Father to the people: He de-

SER.M. clared the approach of an everlasting king-
xvi. dom, into which the righteous should be
admitted; and menaced utter destruction to
those who would not receive His gospel.
He foretold the overthrow of Jerusalem, the
extirpation of all His enemies, and the
establishment of His church, its continu-
ance, spite of every opposition, and its final
triumph. How greatly He resembled Moses
in several particulars, I have already stated
to you in a former discourse; and that He
spake also in His Father's name. I shall
here only notice a solemn declaration He
made of this last, which was peculiarly
calculated to call to the minds of His hear-
ers this characteristick of that prophet that
was to come into the world: it is in the
two concluding verses of the twelfth chapter
of St. John's gospel; “For I have not
spoken of myself, but the Father which
sent me; He gave me a commandment,
what I should say, and what I should speak.
Whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the
Father said unto me, so I speak.” As He
came not to condemn the world, but to save

it,

it, we read of but one act of severity during SERM.
His whole ministry, and that was executed XVI.
on a creature insensible to pain ; the fig-
tree, I mean, which He cursed for its bar-
renness, in significant allusion to the sentence
gone forth against the ungrateful city that
made no return for all that the divine
husbandman had done unto it.

Further, too, as our Lord discharged the office of a prophet in all these particulars, so He demonstrated the justice of His own claim to the character by that incontrovertible proof which was laid down in the law, the completion of His words. The manner of His own death, the success of His gospel, the overthrow of the city and temple, the sufferings of His followers, and the history of His church, have all accorded with His predictions concerning them ; and we challenge our adversaries to produce a single instance, in which what He hath really said, has not followed, nor come to pass, and when they do, we will acknowledge, that it was spoken presumptuously,

SERM. tuously, and that they need not be afraid of
xvi. Him.

It is so well known, that the monarchs of Israel were wont to be anointed for their royal dignity, that it is needless to quote texts in confirmation of this point, but that Christ was to hold this office, we learn from the psalms and the prophets ; “ The kings of the earth (said David in spirit) have set themselves, and the rulers take counfel together against the Lord, and against His anointed—then shall He speak unto them in His wrath—yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.” And in the thirteenth chapter of the prophet Jeremiah, “ Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgement and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely : and this is His name whereby He shall be called, The Lord our Righteousnes.” And Zechariah, in words exactly describing our Lord’s

Lord's entrance into the holy city, “ Re- SERM.
joice greatly, O daughter of Zion ; Shout, ^{XVI.}
O daughter of Jerusalem : Behold thy King
cometh unto thee : He is just, and having
salvation ; lowly, and riding upon an ass,
and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.”

But here the prejudices of the Jews operate more powerfully than on any other part of the character of Jesus. Having, from their eagerness to be delivered from the servitude in which they had been so long holden, formed to themselves a notion that Messiah the King was to appear from the first in power and great majesty, and deliver them from all their enemies round about, they overlooked those prophecies which spake of the intermediate state of humiliation, which described Him as laying down His life for many, as ransoming His people with His own blood, and through afflictions making His way to the glory that should follow. Hence the cross became the great stumbling-block ; and we haye been questioned, How the dignity of
the

SERM. the Messiah was compatible with that ?
XVI. Yet were there not wanting ensigns of
sovereignty not only in the authority with
which He commanded the winds and the
sea, and they obeyed Him ; but when He
ascended up on high, led captivity captive,
and gave gifts unto men : for those gifts,
the exercise of which his enemies did both
see and hear, manifested the perfect truth
of all the claims He had made to be the
Christ, the Son of God, and consequently,
the King of Israel.

Having thus investigated the several rea-
sons for which the title of Christ was ap-
plied to our blessed Saviour, and shewn,
that to Him it belongs in the triple charac-
ter of priest, prophet, and king, it remains
to consider the relation which subsists be-
tween Him and us, indicated by His being
in the text denominated The Lord, and the
obligations thence arising on ourselves.

Now the term Lord includes under it
that absolute dominion which arises from
property.

property. His we are, as originally by right of creation, so since by purchase, being bought with a price, that of His blood shed for our redemption. More particularly His we are by the Father's especial appointment, who hath made Him both Lord and Christ, and given Him all power in Heaven and in earth. It is in reference to this particular relation to us, that the apostle tells us, that there is, as one God, so one Lord, Jesus Christ: and by example as well as precept, hath taught us to look up to Him, as our immediate Protector and heavenly Master; and these several grounds of authority over us are all included in the declaration of God's Messenger in the text, That the Jesus, whose birth He then announced, was Christ, The Lord.

Now the light in which we are thus taught to consider our blessed Saviour, as our Master and our Owner, is not restrained to this world, but extends to that which is to come, wherein, having taken account of His servants, He will award each of them that

recom-

SERM. recompence for which his obedience or his
xvi. disobedience, his fidelity or his faithlessness,
manifested here shall call. What measure
of obedience then, what degree of attention
to His will is due to one whose authority
over us is so justly founded, whose power
is so unlimited? If He who endowed us
with all our powers, require the service of
them all, Is He demanding more than His
own? And if, in some cases, He require
us only not to employ them in the trans-
gression of His law, yet have no attention
paid to His call, must not those who thus
refuse Him attention, be guilty of deep in-
gratitude? If He who willingly laid down
His life to ransom us from the powers of
darkness, command us to take up the cross
and follow Him, and be ready to lose our
lives too for His sake and the Gospel's, Is
He demanding any return which His pre-
ceding kindness to us has not merited at
our hands? If He, on whose word depend
our present lot and our future sentence,
warn us to shape our conduct, and regulate
our conversation in this world, according

to directions He has left us, if His admonitions be not listened to, What can we expect from Him but the treatment due to idle and disobedient servants, the loss of His protection, and banishment from His household?

I can but think, that if Christians would take into consideration that connection which actually subsists between their divine Master and themselves, and duly ponder on it, no small alteration would be produced in their conduct; and instead of being carried away by the wildness of passion, or being lost in insensibility to every religious duty, they would from gratitude for all the great things He has done for them, for all the love He has shewn them, through fear of His almighty power, and His judgements extending to eternity, live in sobriety, and walk with circumspection: through sense of the high patronage with which they are blessed, be zealous in acting worthy of the vocation with which they are called, and fearful of forfeiting that rank to which His
love

SERM. love has given them the means of rising :
xvi. and really count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord : and therefore I would impress on your hearts, that the festivals of the church should never be permitted to pass without recalling to our minds those great instances of divine love which are commemorated on them. That of the present season, the Son of God's coming into the world, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life, should turn our thoughts to the consideration of what a great difference there must be between the condemnation from which we may be delivered, and the life we may obtain, that God should vouchsafe to send so great a person to enable us to avoid the one, and secure the other ? and of what conversation becomes those for whom Heaven hath shewn so much regard ?

In times of festivity, the heart and the tongue are both too apt to transgress the bounds of sobriety and temperance ; the former,

former, elated with mirth, roves in its SERM.
imaginings, and the latter rapidly pours ^{XVI.} forth of its abundance : many are the words
then uttered which, in the moments of cool
reflection, vex the mind, and bring remorse
not only on account of the impolicy or folly
of them, but from their immorality and
impiety. It is not that the peril of falling
into sin at these seasons proceeds from reli-
gion being an enemy to chearfulness, or
well-regulated mirth, but that men laying
aside that caution and restraint which our
degeneracy ever needs, suffer their spirits to
be so elated, and their passions so raised,
that the bounds of truth and modesty are
transgressed, and the dictates of reason gain
no attention.

Such ye must be sensible, in various de-
grees, are the trespasses into which men do too
often suffer themselves to be betrayed when
met together for the purposes of merriment
and feasting : and if it be with justice that
that we lament the folly, and reprove the
perverseness of those who, in any case, abuse

SERM. the favours they receive, when blessings

XVI. which flow more immediately from the providence of God, as His corn, His wine, and the companions He hath given us, are turned into occasions of vice and immorality, were we to encrease the rigour of our rebukes in proportion to the ingratitude and madness of the misconduct, language could hardly supply terms strong enough to represent to the transgressors in this respect the vileness of their offence; especially if such transgressors are, at the time of their offending, celebrating a religious festival. We have no ground for joining in the joy of seasons like the present but as Christians: it is in them that we not only rejoice among ourselves, but ought to assemble universally, and do so in greater numbers, to celebrate that institution which our blessed Lord has left us in memory of Himself. Should we then change these sacred seasons into times of riot and licentiousness? Is not this profaning rather than observing the feast of the Lord? If we observe them not, (and let it particularly be attended to that we do not observe

observe them as Christian festivals, unless we join in celebrating the supper of the Lord) we must be guilty of the most ungrateful insensibility of His inexpressible love to us: and if, in our observance of them, we copy not the examples of our earliest predecessors in christianity, but prefer rather that of the Gentiles in their idolatrous feasts, indulging in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings and banqueting, Is not this giving occasion to our adversaries to mock and blaspheme? What must enemies of the Gospel (the number of whom by no means decreases) think of a religion, for which the very disciples of it have so little respect, that even while commemorating the facts which passed at the time of its first introduction among men, they transgress its laws? How often has it been objected to the doctrine we profess, "Ye talk of its purity and its power, But where is the reformation it has brought about? Do we not see characters as dissolute and profligate in the higher, as idle, drunken, and dishonest in the lower ranks

SERM. of Christians, as among those of any reli-
xvi. gion?" Let me, I beseech you, when next
I hear such questions put, not be obliged to
recur to the general answer, " Many are
called, but few are chosen ;" but enable me
to glory at least in the instance of mine own
household ; and to say, on your part, that
neither my teaching, nor your faith, hath
been vain. Then may we have great
boldness not only in the presence of our
adversaries, but in the day of the Lord ;
together with rejoicing at His coming, Who
having once appeared in humility to bear
the sins of many, shall unto them that look
for Him, quickly appear the second time
unto salvation.

SERMON XVII.

ON THE CRUCIFIXION.

TITUS II. 14.

Who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

ST. PAUL, in his first epistle to Timo- SERM.
thy, makes mention of some, who hav- XVII.
ing put away a good conscience, had also
made shipwreck of faith ; which is (though
it may be hoped not in a very high degree)
yet it is in some measure, the case of all those
who continue in the practice of sin ; since
the true faith of the Gospel, and the trans-
gression of the commandments of God, are

SERM. entirely inconsistent: for no man being
XVII. willing to bring evil on himself; while
those punishments with which the Gospel
threatens the disobedient (be their excuse
for their disobedience what it may) are sin-
cerely believed, no man will subject him-
self to them; therefore when temptations
arise, if the imaginary pleasures of sin
allure, men immediately begin to look out
for some hopes of escaping the penalty an-
nexed, though they commit the crime; and
this search is conducted in different methods,
according to the difference of constitution,
sense, and knowledge, that are to be found in
men. Some of bold spirit, and a little in-
formation, (which is often worse than none)
being on the one hand sensible, that if the
Christian faith be well founded, there can
be no hope for those who do not depart
from iniquity, and, on the other, desirous
of getting rid of all restraints on their plea-
sures at once, collect the several objections
against the Gospel which have been raised
by various infidels in several ages, and from
the presumption that these may be just,
take

take courage to reject it as a forgery and an SERM.
imposition, as a fable cunningly devised by ^{XVII.} man, and not a revelation worthy to pro-
ceed from God. Now of these men, we
must at least say, that they appear to truely
understand the terms of the Gospel-ac-
ceptance, and to honour the dispensation so
far as to confess, that under it there is no
security for vice. But there are others who
equally backward to deny themselves the
gratifications that are forbidden, yet either
having the chief articles of the faith more
deeply imprinted in their minds by educa-
tion, or being of a less daring and more
scrupulous disposition, do still continue to
believe the truth of revelation in general ;
while they embrace opinions which are to-
tally inconsistent with *that* of particular
parts of it ; in pursuance of which, they
allow themselves with no apprehension of
the wrath of God in practices that not only
militate against some of His most expres-
commands, but are diametrically opposite
to the spirit of christianity ; manifesting
thereby, that though their faith continue

SERMON. indeed with regard to the facts recorded in
XVII. scripture, yet it is somewhat impaired with
respect to the truth and importance of all
its doctrines.

The consideration of the equal danger of these different errors will, I persuade myself, induce you, without further exhortation, to give me your attention while I set before you the doctrine of the text, which, if duly weighed, and faithfully retained, will be found a most desirable antidote to both,

The ends for which our blessed Saviour submitted to death were, as the apostle tells us, “to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” And will the most confident of unbelievers presume to affirm, that this was a work so unworthy the Son of God to undertake, that the history of it is not to be believed? Was it needless? Or was it unimportant? Or does it manifest to us any attribute in the Deity, which

which the works of nature do not teach us SERM.
to acknowledge? Were not all men before XVII.
the coming of Christ in such a state that,
to use the language of scripture, they came
short of the glory of God? Were they not
ignorant of the dignity of their own na-
ture, and of the purity and majesty of the
divine; and of the great and necessary
sanctions of religion? And did not their
ignorance, in these respects, lead whole na-
tions into such practices, that, if permitted
to have continued, would have been a re-
proach to the Governour of the world, and
reflected disgrace on the Creatour of such
beings? But an end could not have been
put to these unless by either destroying
mankind, or instructing them, and im-
proving their reason (which had already
shewn itself insufficient to guide them) in
such a manner, as might still leave them at
liberty to act as they would, while it gave
them power to discover and pursue that
course which was the right one. And
whether it were more worthy of God to
annihilate the race, or to afford them the
instruct-

SERM. instruction and assistance they needed, let
XVII. any man judge!

But farther; justice and mercy are to be equally ascribed to God; and they both shine forth with distinguished lustre in his natural government of the world: to vice and intemperance are annexed as their natural consequences, disease of body, and uneasiness of mind: virtue and sobriety, on the contrary, do produce peace within, and health and vigour without. And are not the glorious attributes I have mentioned, displayed too in the redemption of mankind by Christ? Consider the matter as stated in Scripture, first viewing the leading fact both as mentioned there, and confirmed by observation, "that man was created upright, a creature perfect in his kind, but did corrupt himself, and by doing what he was conscious he ought not to have done, acquired a degeneracy of nature. For God to have immediately interposed to have corrected this wilful depravity, without any satisfaction made on the part of man, would have

have been rewarding sin, and holding forth SERM.
encouragement to His creatures to trans- XVII.
gress His laws; it would have been acting
totally inconsistent with justice, which de- ~~~~~
mands as well that sin be punished, as that
virtue be rewarded. The immediate de-
struction of the race was prevented by the
divine wisdom and mercy, foreseeing, that
if an offer of salvation was made on certain
terms, *many* would *embrace* it, and recover to
their own everlasting felicity, that perfection
of nature, which they had first missed of
by their father's fall, and *that* in the punish-
ment of those who might reject this gra-
cious offer, the justice of God would be
still more manifest, since their ingratitude
and perverseness in refusing the proffered
mercy would render them both, in fact, and
in the eyes of all rational beings, totally
undeserving of further forbearance. Now
could it be unworthy of the Son of God to
take a principal part in a dispensation which,
like this, was calculated to advance both
the glory of His Father, and the happiness
of His creatures, "wherein mercy and
truth

SERM. "Truth would meet together, righteousness
XVII. and peace would kill each other?" If not,
~~~~ What have you to object to? Are you  
offended at the kindness which your Saviour  
has testified in doing so much for you? Or  
are you angry at the Gospel, because it sets  
forth, in a still brighter light, those very  
attributes which natural religion teaches us  
to ascribe to God? Because it affirms that  
He is of too pure eyes to behold iniquity;  
or that He is too just not to punish incorri-  
gible sinners; or too good not to afford to  
those who will make use of them, oppor-  
tunities and means of repentance and recov-  
ery?

But, perhaps, it is none of these singly, it is the whole of revelation together that you cannot digest; there is something mys-  
terious and wonderful in it that you cannot account for, neither fully comprehend: And is it surprizing, that you cannot fathom the depth of the wisdom and goodness of God? It is as high as Heaven; What canst thou do? It is deeper than Hell; What canst thou

thou know? For once, then, lay aside the SERM. opinion of your own understanding being infinite! Pry not into secret things, for they belong unto the Lord! but be content to reason from what is already before you. That it was not inconsistent with the majesty of God to make such creatures as men, and provide for their temporal provision and comfort; your present existence, and all the enjoyments you have tasted, demonstrate; Why then deem it impossible, that, after He had made them, He should interpose to rescue them from the evils their own folly was bringing on them, and redeem them from all iniquity? This redemption is but an act of the same goodness that first gave you being; and its agreeableness to the character of God, is a pledge of the truth of Scripture in ascribing it to Him. The means made use of were, doubtlessly, surprizing; But who will be bold enough to say, that any others would have been adequate to the purpose? a wonderful and horrible thing had been committed; part of the universe had rebelled against their Creatour,

SERM. tour, and set his laws at nought. The eyes  
XVII. of all rational beings, capable of viewing  
and considering the dispensations of God,  
which the Scripture informs us many are,  
must have been immediately fixed on his  
dealings in this case; and we may well  
think, that the dispensation carried on to  
remedy the evil in such a manner, as to  
make His justice and mercy equally visible,  
in His dealings with us His fallen creatures,  
must have been miraculous on the whole;  
while we may justly presume, too, that one  
part of it would be, the purifying of those  
who were willing, from the corruption they  
had contracted, and restoring of them to  
such a state that their existence should be  
happy to themselves, and honourable to  
God—in the words of the text, “Redeem-  
ing us from all iniquity, and purifying to  
Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good  
works.”

But if the work of redemption be pre-  
sumed to be adapted to the Son of God, in  
that it is the establishment of righteousness  
and

and felicity, upon the ruins of sin and SERM.  
misery ; How happens it, (it may be asked) XVII.  
that wickedness is still very prevalent in the  
world, when the knowledge of the Gospel  
is diffused more widely than ever ? To this  
we have to answer, “ That Christ came  
not to force, but to call sinners to repen-  
tance.” To all who would listen to this  
call, He offered such spiritual assistance as  
should enable them to subdue their evil  
affections, and obtain habits of true virtue  
and holiness. Many have rejected this  
offer ; many more have pretended to accept  
it, but proving unwilling to make the exer-  
tions required on their part, have received  
no benefit from it. Some few, however,  
in every age, have sincerely embraced it,  
and having passed through the proper season  
of trial, have been gradually transferred  
from hence, to a more happy state, there to  
wait God’s appointed time, when the num-  
ber of His elect being accomplished, He  
shall compleatly establish His kingdom of  
righteousness. Then shall be the full mani-  
festation of the sons of God ; and those  
who

SERM. who have honestly used the means of purification obtained by the death of Christ, and turning from vice, have, through their own labour, made successful by His blessing on it, acquired a zeal for good works, shall be declared his *peculiar people*.

How many there may be of those now working out their salvation on earth, we know not. It is evident, indeed, that there are among us, numbers who belong not to that flock, since we can know them by the marks our Lord His self hath left us, “their fruits.” But whether all who do appear to the world to be zealous of good works are really so, must rest undetermined until the secrets of all hearts be disclosed. And *these things* had the Gospel taught us, that all mankind should have become holy through Christ, might have been justly objected to it; but that, on the contrary, though it inform all men how they may become so, yet it always speaks of those who would behave like the true servants of Jesus, as a small number in

com-

comparison of those who would not, as— SERM.  
“ a peculiar people.”

XVII.



To the description of which people, as given in the text and other parts of Scripture, I would particularly wish you to attend; for by seeing that the several declarations relating to them, all agree in giving them the same character, you will perceive that there is but one method of getting yourselves included in the number; which is a piece of knowledge not only important, but absolutely necessary: since there is no case in which the very common observation that we too easily credit, what we wish to be true, is more frequently verified than in this of religion; wherein men being desirous of obtaining salvation on the most easy terms they can, fondly receive those interpretations of particular passages that make the way to Heaven the shortest; and greedily listen to such teachers as, through folly, or impious craft, preach what is acceptable to their hearers, in lieu of what the Gospel contains.

SERM. Against the insinuating doctrines of these  
xvii. false teachers, arm yourselves with the fol-  
~~~~~ lowing truths : “ That if Christ gave Him-  
self for us, that He might redeem us from
all iniquity ; then ought every one who
nameth the name of Christ, to depart from
evil ; for he who does not, counteracts the
purpose for which the Redeemer died, and
renders vain with respect to himself the
grace of God which hath appeared, teach-
ing us, that denying ungodliness and worldly
lusts, we should live soberly, righteously,
and godly.”

That while we are told, that Jesus died
to purify to Himself a peculiar people,
zealous of good works, we are also taught
by the same authority, that *that* purification
is not brought about merely by the absolute
power of God operating on the several sub-
jects of it ; but, by His grace, co-operating
with their sincere and strenuous endeavours.
For on what conditions did our Saviour
promise the Comforter to His disciples ? On
that plainly of keeping His commandments..

“ If

" If you love Me, said He, keep my commandments ; and I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another comforter, that He may abide with you for ever." SERM. XVII.

John xiv. 15. To whom did He promise to manifest Himself ? and with whom said He, that His Father and He would make their abode, but with him who should keep His commandments ? In what ground did He say, the seed of the word truly flourished, and brought forth fruit, but in *that* of a good and honest heart ? *There may be*, who receive the word with joy, and keep it till temptation doth arise ; *there may be*, who retain it a longer time, but in whom it is at length choaked with the cares, riches, or pleasures of this world ; but *none of these* (I have the authority of our Lord for saying it) are of His peculiar people ; *that* title belongs to those alone, who bring forth fruit with patience.

Therefore let not any man deceive you with vain words, or by persuading you to look within you for any fancied testimony

SERM. of the spirit, induce you to overlook the
xvii. apostolick rule, which is the only one that
may be depended on, for determining whe-
ther you are the Lord's.—“ That those
who are Christ's have crucified the flesh,
together with the affections and lusts there-
of.” To obtain for you the power to do
this, was the end of Christ's submitting to
death ; the recollection of which, one might
imagine, would raise in us the will like-
wise. Reflect only on the wonderful fact
which we this day commemorate ; the Son
of God, after having condescended to take
our nature on Him, stooping still further,
and patiently passing through the lowest
state of human misery !—Surely the differ-
ent consequences of human conduct must
be unspeakably important, that the know-
ledge of them should move so great a per-
son as God to interpose, to turn us from the
practice of sin to that of righteousness.—
Whether we act according to, or against the
dictates of our conscience ; whether we
obey or break the commandments of God ;
whether we walk in the narrow path of
religion,

religion, and ramble in the broad ways of SERM. vice, can never be a matter of so slight moment as it is generally esteemed, since errors of little consequence would not have called down the Son of God from Heaven to rectify them. Much less now He has appeared, can it remain indifferent which course we pursue; that of righteousness or that of iniquity; whatever He hath established concerning the ends of each, must remain fixed and immutable; and in not listening to the instructions He hath left us concerning them, we shall acquire the accumulated guilt of despising the plainest lessons, given by the highest authority, manifested by the mean through which they were delivered to be of the utmost importance, and recommended by the compleatest evidence of the sincere love and good-will of Him who gave them; “ For greater love than this hath no man, that a man should lay down his life for his friends.”

The sum of the whole is this; that the Scriptures, in declaring the end of Christ’s

z 3 suffer-

SERM. sufferings to be that He might redeem us
XVII. from all iniquity, and purify to Himself a
peculiar people, zealous of good works,
have given a reason for the wondrous fact
which at once cancels all the objections of
unbelievers, setting the divine wisdom, juf-
tice, and mercy, in the most glorious and
amiable light ; and at the same time takes
every hope of the partaking of the benefits
of His death, from all those who do not
entirely forsake the works of sin which He
came to destroy ; and we, in pursuance of
the apostolick direction, do continue to teach
and remind you of these things ; constantly
exhorting you, that if ye do indeed, as ye
profess to do, believe in God, ye be careful
to maintain good works, looking for that
blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of
the Great God, and our Saviour Jefus Christ.

SERMON XVIII.

CONCLUDING DISCOURSE.

ST. LUKE XII. 32.

*Fear not, little flock : for it is your Father's
good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

“ **W**HAT is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?” was the exclamation of one whose own history yields a remarkable instance of the free goodness of God; from following the sheep-folds had he been taken, and seated upon the throne of Israel; numerous were the dangers he encountered, and as numerous the deliverances he experienced. The dependence he felt on the divine providence, in his private

SER.M. fortunes, seems to have led him to extend
XVIII. his thoughts to the manner in which all
mankind enjoy the blessings of God's go-
vernment: and the great things done for
this favoured race, struck him with admira-
tion, but by no means shocked his faith ;
although on minds not so strong, and less
informed, the very circumstance which calls
the most earnestly for our gratitude and
love, the unspeakable condescension of the
Lord, sometimes raises doubts as to its own
reality, and men are backward to believe,
that such as they are, can be objects of so
much regard to the Sovereign of the uni-
verse.

To Christians who have any misgivings
of this kind, the text contains a satisfactory
reply ; because convinced of the divine
authority of Him who spake the words,
they can no more doubt, that it is the
Father's good pleasure to give them the
kingdom, than they can doubt of His
power to perform what He wills. But the
unbeliever may either except to the evidence
given

given of its being the will of God, or say, SERM.
that after all, the point itself is so incredible, XVIII.
that nothing but an immediate revelation to
himself should convince him of its truth.
Now to enable you to refute his objections,
which ever of these grounds he takes, I shall
make it the busines of the present discourse,
to apply so much of the evidence of religion
as I have already laid before you, to his
exceptions in the first case; and afterward
suggest to you a full reply to what is ad-
vanced in the other.

In solution of the doubts, whether any
attention is vouchsafed by the Deity to the
human race in general, I first proved by
appealing to your own feelings, that our
Creatour hath implanted in our breasts a
principle of religion in that indeterminate
fear of some invisible Being which natu-
rally arises in the human mind, and that,
since a perfectly wise Being would never
endow a creature with a faculty which had
no object, the very existence of this fear
within us is itself a proof, that He meant
the

SERM. the race should preserve a connection with
XVIII. Him by acts of devotion. In further reply
~~~~~ to the same doubts, I next stated to you, that our own being, with such limited powers, and so precarious a mode of existence, affords a demonstration that the race received its beginning from One mightier than themselves: and this constituting a proof from fact, that God did not think it unworthy of Him to make us, we may most confidently conclude, that after that He will not neglect creatures whom He has endowed with faculties to know, and serve Him.

In the next discourse, I laid before you the most manifest testimonies of the divine attention being extended to mankind, in the wonderful provision the Lord hath made for our support and comfort by the constitution of the material world; in which even many ill effects of our folly and ill conduct are provided against; these works evincing, that the Authour of them knew our necessities long before, and was able and

and willing to furnish a supply for them : SERM.  
and I closed the consideration of this head XVIII.  
of our heavenly Father's general care of  
our race, by stating to you some leading in-  
stances of the divine interposition in great  
political revolutions, and the proofs afforded  
by these, that the Lord hath not relin-  
quished the government of the earth, but  
ruleth in the kingdom of men, putting  
down one, and setting up another, accord-  
ing to His good pleasure.

Having thus furnished you with answers  
to doubts that can be raised only by the  
actual Atheist, it became requisite next to  
consider, those which may be started against  
that exceeding greatness of God's love to  
men which the Gospel indicates. Here  
then it was shewn, that the more wonderful  
the facts taught us by revelation are, the  
more impressive is the evidence God hath  
been pleased to provide of the truth of that  
revelation, selecting, by a most signal dis-  
pensation, one particular people to be signs  
unto the world : to whose history the atten-  
tion

SERM. tion of the other nations of the earth hath  
XVIII. been called, after a remarkable manner, and  
~~~~~ to the continuance of whose singular state  
and wide dispersion we ourselves are eye
witnesses. To this people were given sta-
tutes and a course of discipline, which ren-
dered it more difficult for a mere pretender
to inspiration to succeed among them than
among the inhabitants of any other country
on earth : and among them it was declared
should appear that great Person, through
whom all the sons of Adam might obtain
deliverance from the evils brought upon the
race by the disobedience of the first pair
of it.

To this most important character were
the expectations of that and other nations
turned by a long course of predictions,
which so specified all the particulars of His
lineage, His birth, His wondrous acts, His
extraordinary sufferings, and His singular
triumph, that it was impossible the whole
number of these should concur in any other
than in Him, who was the real object of
the

the prophecies : the nature of the salvation SERM. affirmed to be wrought by Him is such as XVIII. never could have suggested itself to the mind of any one unacquainted with the true history of mankind ; and the remedies given for the corruption, the helps provided for the infirmities and wants of men, the manner in which their most intimate desires are met, and in which their presentiment and aspiration after immortality are accounted for, and objects worthy of their pursuit, and a scene of action adequate to their powers are disclosed, and the present mysterious appearance of things explained, are such as could proceed only from the omniscience and authority of the Maker and Sovereign of the world. Neither can the performance of such great things for mankind be accounted for but on the very motive against which the objector points his doubt, the love of God to the works of His hands. That He should regard these is so far from incredible, that it is hard to be believed He should do otherwise; and that the love of the Lord should move Him to
do

SERM. do those great things whereof we rejoice;
 XVIII. the recollection of His abundant goodness
 ~~~~~ and unlimited power may easily convince  
 us: so that through these incontrovertible  
 truths we regularly come to the conclusion,  
 that “ it may be His good pleasure to give  
 us the kingdom;” and if it be so, Who  
 shall counteract it?

The difficulty which men find in believing that the Almighty does so much for the human race, generally, perhaps, arises from their reasoning concerning His works, according to the notions they have formed from the deeds of men. The acts of benevolence which these do to any under their patronage, must be limited in proportion to the bounds of their own power; but His power being infinite, and His goodness perfect, His kindness needs to be restrained only by the capacity of those on whom it is conferred; and, consequently, it can never be in itself incredible, that He will give the kingdom to those who shall be found meet to partake of such an inheritance.

But

But by some, it is said, that many ages SERM.  
are past since this inheritance was promised, XVIII.  
and still those who are said to be the heirs  
of it receive no distinguishing marks of  
being the peculiar favourites of Heaven;  
and hence arise other doubts as to the great-  
ness of the divine attention to them. Now,  
surely, those who hold it incredible, that  
men should be objects of the regard of the  
Almighty, can hardly object, that if He  
deign to make them such, He keeps the  
times and seasons of conferring His blessings  
on them in His own power. The objec-  
tion itself is, in reality, the same as that of  
the scoffers mentioned by St. Peter, “ Where  
is the promise of His coming? for since  
the fathers fell asleep, all things continue  
as they were from the beginning of the  
creation :” and it merits the same answer,  
that the assertion it contains is not true, be-  
cause even in the material world changes  
have happened, not only since the beginning,  
but since the publication of the Gospel;  
and how many more in the moral! How  
many of those facts have come to pass,  
which

SERMON. which our Lord and His prophets foretold  
XVIII. should intervene between the age in which  
they lived, and the end of the world ! And  
what is every accomplishment of a prediction  
relating to the church, but an additional  
proof that the fortunes of that church have  
been an object of His providence, Who can  
alone look with certainty into futurity ?  
Behold, then, the symptoms required ! To  
give a beginning to this kingdom among  
men, were, as I have shewn you, unnum-  
bered miracles wrought ; the power of death  
was vanquished, and heavenly gifts were  
given unto men ; and to shew that it was  
the Father's good pleasure to give the king-  
dom to the little flock that then made its first  
appearance on the theatre of the world, it  
was by spiritual assistance only enabled to  
baffle all the attempts which the greatest  
earthly powers made to disperse and destroy  
it ; and surviving all their efforts, gained  
possession of the imperial throne, receiving  
in this temporal a type of its everlasting  
triumph : and to preserve it from being  
overwhelmed by the most dangerous enemy  
of

of all, prosperity, were the corruptions consequent on that prosperity foretold, and the struggles of those who would not join in these corruptions described, and the judgments of God on such apostacy predicted; by the whole of which is formed a course of prophecies reaching to that period when He who gave the promise of the text hath told us, He will return to perform it, and take His servants to reign with Him.

Further, too, for the guidance of this flock while on earth, there have been given those laws which, in various other discourses, I have set before you, and which prescribe a conduct superior to all that the wisest of legislators, or of moral teachers, ever directed, or endeavoured to inculcate, and which is calculated to produce habits suited to a more excellent state than that in which we now are situated; and which habits we are told in the Scriptures that contain those laws, are required for the express purpose of rendering us fit to be admitted to that state.

SERM. When, then, such preparations have been  
XVIII. made for the establishment of this kingdom, What want of significant signs that it is the Father's good pleasure to give it to this little flock? Who could thus openly take a people from the midst of all nations, and form them into a permanent society, on principles beneficial not only to themselves, but to all around them, and adapted to the everlasting promotion of peace and happiness, but the supreme Dispenser of every good and perfect gift? And is not His doing this, His calling them to a conduct and conversation which so often must expose them to ill usage from the wicked with whom they cannot but be mixed here, a sufficient indication that it is in a future state that the virtues to which they are here trained shall be exercised with fruit to themselves, and those who are found faithful in a little here, be there made rulers over much?

Having thus reminded you of the answers with which the discourses we have gone through

through have furnished you to the objections perverse or ignorant men may urge against the testimony we have of its being the good pleasure of God to exalt the faithful followers of Christ to never-fading crowns of glory, let us now consider the last plea in which the unbeliever endeavours to find refuge, that the point itself is so incredible, that nothing less than an immediate revelation to himself should convince him of its truth.

Now this plea would be less unreasonable, were it ours to determine after what manner God should make known His will to men; but even then it would proceed on a mere presumption, that of the insignificance of the human race in the eyes of their Creatour. For what is the ground of this imagination? here on earth all things are manifestly put in subjection under their feet: and what if there be innumerable worlds, inhabited by intelligent and moral beings, Will their number distract the attention, or exhaust the benevolence or power

SER.M. of the Lord ; leaving but a little that He  
XVIII. can do for men ? Or, to come still nearer to  
the point, What is it that makes one crea-  
ture of more importance in the sight of our  
common Maker than another ? If there be  
any particular which does this, Is it not in  
the power of the Almighty to endow any  
species He pleases with it, and thus render  
them fit objects of His tender mercies ?  
And on what ground will you presume to  
assert, that the sons of Adam have not been  
thus blessed ? As far as human conjecture  
may venture to go, it should seem, that this  
consists in a capacity for happiness or misery,  
in the power of enjoyment or suffering :  
And who can say, that any beings possess  
this capacity in an higher degree than men  
do ? At least the very same Scriptures that  
teach us, that our heavenly Father vouch-  
safes so much regard, inform us likewise,  
that we are made for everlasting duration,  
and, consequently, are capable of never-  
ceasing happiness or misery ; and thus fully  
account for that tender concern which He  
manifests

manifests for our inheriting the future SERM.  
blessings, and escaping the wrath to come. XVIII.

Lastly, then, be it granted, that on the theatre of the universe this globe of ours may indeed seem to beings, reasoning as we do, of little comparative importance, yet since God feeth not as man feeth, neither worketh as man worketh, but manifests His glory by effecting His purposes by instruments weak in themselves, and apparently inadequate, may He not have chosen creatures, mean as we are, to serve Him in some grand dispensation, in which beings of higher rank, nay, the whole universe, are concerned; and if He has, all doubts arising from the presumed insignificance of the human species in itself, fall to the ground at once, since it is not for our sake, but His own glory, that He hath chosen us. Nor is it merely supposition that He has so. We are informed in the sacred writings, that superior beings are by no means unconcerned spectators of the work of human redemption. We are not only

SERM. told by our blessed Saviour Himself, that  
XVIII. there is rejoicing in Heaven over a sinner  
~~~~~ that repenteth, but by St. Peter, that angels  
desire to look into the dispensation; and
that angels, authorities, and powers, are
made subject unto Christ: and St. Paul asks
his converts, “ Know ye not that we shall
judge the angels?” The analogy of the
divine counsels in the Gospel, too, confirm
the same thing. In the whole of that His
strength was made perfect in weakness.
From the lowest ranks of a nation at that
time greatly despised, did the preachers go
forth to preach to the nations the doctrine
of Christ crucified; and, in the course of
its promulgation, not many wise men after
the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble
were called; but God chose the foolish
things of the world to confound the wise;
and God chose the weak things of the world
to confound the things which are mighty;
and the base things of the world, and things
which are despised, hath God chosen, and
things which are not, to bring to nought
things that are. That according as it is
written,

written, “ He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

SERM.
XVIII.


An attentive reader of the Holy Scriptures will find many passages corroborating, and explaining the idea I have now suggested to you, that the consequences and effects of the Christian dispensation are not restrained merely to the sons of Adam. And what a scene is thus disclosed to the contemplative mind in the boundless extent, and inestimable importance of that scheme, in which a part is vouchsafed to every sincere disciple of the Gospel ! Often has it been argued, that we see but a portion of the government of God ; and, indeed, an apostle tells us, (doubtless intending something more than to make a trite observation) that we know but in part. If, then, according to what I have now stated, we have been made by God to shew forth His praise on a more extended theatre than the globe on which we ourselves dwell, the importance of our designation will solve many difficulties, and

A a 4

clear

SER.M. clear many doubts, which men of partial
XVIII. enquiry are apt to start.

In the first place, the faith of such need be no longer shocked at measures so great and extensive having been taken to call the attention of men to the truths of religion. For as when we learn, that the people of Israel were, from the first, appointed to be the instruments of the salvation of God to the ends of the earth, we no longer find it difficult to account for the share of the divine patronage which they have enjoyed; when, according to the phrase of Scripture, He instructed them by His prophets, rising up early, and teaching them, so shall we no longer be surprized at the signal means used for the instruction of the human race in general, when we are informed, that from them are to be selected a chosen few to be exalted to a station conspicuous in the eyes of all created beings.

Neither will the greatness of the Mediator be a stumbling-block on account of the mean-

meanness of the race for whom He condescended to submit to death, if it be considered, that the consequences of this astonishing instance of humility and love may extend throughout the universe ; and as, although He was crucified by the Jews, He died not for that nation only, but that also He might gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad ; so although He took not on Him the nature of angels, but that of men, the glory of His exaltation may be felt by all the heavenly host.

Again ; that which is in truth much the most extensive cause of offence, the purity of the laws, and the integrity of the morality of the Gospel, appear in this view of things to be matter of absolute necessity : for how should those who are not practised in self-command be fit to be entrusted with charges of importance. The question is that of our Lord Himself ; “ He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much ; and he that is unjust in the least,

SER. least, is unjust also in much. If, there-
XVIII. fore, ye have not been faithful in the un-
righteous manner, who will commit to your
trust the true riches? And if ye have not
been faithful in that which is another man's,
Who shall give you that which is your
own?" The abuse or neglect of wealth,
opportunities and faculties with which we
are now entrusted, manifestly indicate, that
to consign to us more important trusts,
would be the dictate of neither wisdom nor
justice; and therefore are we exhorted so
earnestly to live soberly, righteously, and
godly in this present world. To the
thoughtless lovers of it, indeed, these ad-
monitions seem harsh, and being accustomed
to estimate the guilt of transgressions merely
by what others suffer through them, the
pernicious and destructive effects of the
personal vices are overlooked by them: yet
do but once seriously reflect, how totally
unfit those who have accustomed themselves
to make our heavenly Father's precepts of
righteousness give way to their passions or
their fancies, are to be advanced to stations
of

of higher honour, and of greater trust, and SERM.
you will see a moral impossibility, that XVIII.
those who have passed their lives here in
the service of sin or folly, should shine as
the servants of God hereafter: and if this
high prize of our calling may be lost
through the transient gratifications of our
bodily appetites, or of our corrupt inclina-
tions of mind, through habits of intem-
perance or riot, of luxury or dissipation,
How inexpressibly important, how worthy
of the most anxious attention, are those
lessons which direct us to consider these as
enemies to our future glory and happiness,
and to avoid them ! And how truely do they
manifest themselves to be the very dictates
we might expect from Him, Who would
that no man should perish, but that all
should come to eternal life !

Under this view, how are the trials we
here meet with dignified, and how truely
wise, just, and kind, appear the exhorta-
tions given us to fight the good fight, and
bear hardship like good soldiers of Christ,

SERM. that we may hereafter be crowned: and
XVIII. when such crowns are certainly laid up for
them, how reasonably may the faithful fol-
lowers of the Son of God deem all their
sufferings in this life not worthy to be com-
pared with the glory which shall hereafter
be revealed in them. As, on the other
hand, how severe will be the remorse, how
bitter the anguish of those, who in that
day shall find, that they are cut off from
all inheritance among the people of God!
This consideration is of itself, perhaps, suf-
ficient to clear all doubts about the intense-
ness of the torments of the damned, with-
out taking into the account the additional
punishments which may be justly heaped
on them, for their daring rebellion against
their Creatour, and their ungrateful rejec-
tion of His proffered mercies. While the
having secured a contrary lot for ever and
ever must as naturally excite in the breasts
of all, who receive a favourable sentence
from the God of their salvation, a degree
of rejoicing, and a permanency of happi-
ness, by no means too highly described by
any

any of the emblematical descriptions I have SERM.
from the Holy Scriptures set before you, of ^{XVIII.}
the joys of the blessed hereafter.

What then remains, but to exhort and to
beseech you all, as partakers of this hea-
venly calling, not to think scorn of the
proffered inheritance, or, like Esau, pro-
fanely sell your birth-right for a mes of
pottage: for to you belongs the assurance
of the text, and to as many both near and
afar off as the Lord our God shall call.
True it is, that in comparison with the
multitude to which it has been extended,
few have obeyed this calling; and even
against this little flock the most vehement
and ceaseless opposition has been made by
the children of the world, and the powers
of darkness: but the effect of this opposi-
tion hath been only to manifest which are
the true, which the pretended disciple of
Christ, to separate the wheat from the chaff,
to try the elect as the gold is tried, in the
fire, and to confirm the assurance of the
text, that it is the Father's good pleasure

to

SERM. to give them the kingdom, by the pledge
XVIII. of this which His church has received in
the never-failing protection and support
vouchsafed unto it against all its enemies,
and under all its trials; until, in the pre-
sent age, that succession of signs which its
divine Master was pleased previously to
mark as symptoms of His return to take
account of His servants, being nearly run
out, the coming of our Lord approaches
fast, and He is now (almost without a me-
taphor) even at the doors.

What manner of men, then, does it be-
come us to be in all our conversation? Shall
we, conforming ourselves to the fashion of
the world, spend our time in rioting and
drunkenness, in chambering and wantonness,
in strife and envying; or putting on the
Lord Jesus Christ, make not provision for
the flesh to fulfil the lusts of that; but be
like servants waiting for their Lord?

By thus delivering you a word of exhorta-
tion every Lord's day, I have so far en-
deavoured

deavoured to get myself numbered among SERM.
those who shall be found not eating and xviii.
drinking with the drunken, or beating the
man-servants and maid-servants, but giving
them their meat in due season ; if ye will
not receive, and duely use this spiritual
food, your future and everlasting portion
must be with the unbelievers ; but if we
all honestly unite in hearing the word, and
keeping it, then at whatever hour the Lord
returns, we shall be found watching ; and
for our brief sufferings, our trifling labour
here, be recompensed with that inestimable
sentence, “ Come ye blessed of my Father,
inherit the kingdom prepared for you from
the foundation of the world.”

F I N I S.

